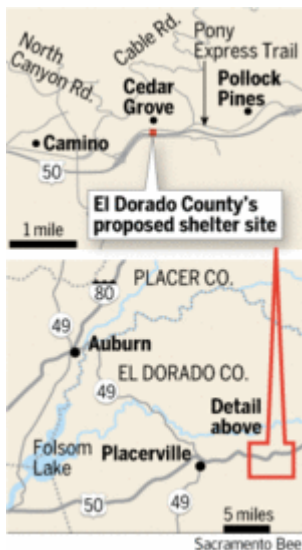


Slideshow



Lezlie Sterling/lstirling@sacbee.com

Ron Sachs with United Outreach, left, hands out items such as candles and socks, from the back of his vehicle to Randy Urech, right, a Placerville homeless Placerville man at Lumsden Park in Placerville on Thursday.



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More Information

- How would you vote on "tent communities" for the homeless?

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Our SOOO SAD...commentors/posters,let's get together and help the homeless. what do you say???????

-- alexis_23

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Aid pours in for El Dorado County homeless

By Diana Lambert

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Published: Monday, Jan. 26, 2009 | Page 1A

Vanessa Dillon spent her first week as a homeless person in El Dorado County camped out on a hill in a park.

It was tolerable, she said, until the rain.

On Wednesday night, rain poured down onto the tents of the camp at Lumsden Park in Placerville.

The 53-year-old woman, who says her family once owned the Vineyard House in Coloma, started to cry Thursday as she spoke of her experiences this past week. "It's very cold," Dillon said. "It's hard living in 12 hours of darkness."

It would had been worse for Dillon and other homeless campers, were it not for the tents, tarps, blankets and clothes given by El Dorado County residents.

Donations have rolled in as word spread about the lack of a homeless shelter in the area, said Art Edwards, president of nonprofit United Outreach of El Dorado County, which serves the homeless.

Church groups are cooking meals and cleaning up campsites. Youth groups are handing out care packages. A club knits warm wool caps. And teenagers are collecting food and blankets.

United Outreach of El Dorado plans to run a homeless shelter at a tentative site at 4570 Pony Express Trail in Cedar Grove. United Outreach officials say the shelter could open within seven months.

Everyone seems to want to help the county's homeless survive this winter.

As humanitarian efforts gear up in El Dorado, the tough times have spurred new outreach efforts and broadened existing ones throughout the region for the homeless. In Sacramento, talk is growing about opening a tent city for the homeless. And The Gathering Inn of Roseville takes a collaborative approach to offer a homeless shelter that rotates among Placer County church sanctuaries.

Whatever form the help takes, the recipients seem especially appreciative these days. Like the campers at Lumsden Park, who emerged from the brush at noon Thursday, shivering but mostly dry.

"This is overwhelming," said Randy Urech as he was loaded up with blankets, a sweater and a

jacket from the back of Ron Sachs' red Jeep Liberty. "Don't make me cry."

Dillon hugged Edwards. "I love you for getting me the tent," she said. "We're keeping dry."

Sachs, who was homeless for four months once himself, now leads United Outreach's Volunteers Building Together program. He serves as a coordinator for local organizations and individuals that want to help the homeless.

"It's human nature that people want to help those who are down or downtrodden," Sachs said.

He said he's experienced this sort of generosity from the public before, when he founded the East San Gabriel Valley Coalition for the Homeless in the early 1990s.

Now his Jeep is always full of tarps, blankets, sweaters, candles, cooking pots and care packages containing underwear, socks, mittens, wool caps and personal hygiene items.

Sachs said donations of goods and cash come from church groups, members of a women's gym, businesses and individual residents. The wool caps are knitted by the Mad Hatters of El Dorado, a club that usually makes caps for needy children.

Urech, 54, smiled as Sachs tossed him a bright red cap for his girlfriend, Kathy Noel, 51.

"She was crying this morning," Urech said.

The group huddled under umbrellas, waiting for lunch to arrive. Larry and Diane Miller and their 13-year-old daughter Sarah, from Cold Springs Community Church, took longer than expected at their first stop, a homeless encampment behind Prospector's Plaza off Missouri Flat Road in Placerville.

But the family soon arrived, opened their tailgate and set out a meal of enchiladas, beans and rice after erecting an awning to protect diners from the rain.

A few pickup trucks pulled into the park and the men inside joined the diners briefly.

On this inclement day, only eight people show up for the hot meal, but Edwards said the number is usually between 15 and 22. Another 10 to 15 are usually served lunch behind Prospector's Plaza each day.

Members of Foothills United Methodist Church of Rescue and Cold Springs Community Church and Federated Church of Placerville take turns serving lunch seven days a week.

But they aren't the only groups helping out.

Saturday 13 members of Hands 4 Hope, a local youth group, handed out socks, sandwiches and bags filled with pop-top canned food to homeless living in the woods near Missouri Flat Road.

"It's glorious when you stand here and look at these young people," Sachs said Saturday by phone from the site. "It's cold and wet, and they are out here. Why are they out here? Something in their heart."

Scoutmaster Doug Spring said his Scouts were well received when they trekked through the woods near Missouri Flat Road and visited Lumsden Park to hand out care packages to the homeless a few days before Christmas.

Spring said Boy Scout Troop 550 from Rescue probably will head for the woods with care packages again in the next few months.

Oak Ridge High School senior Jayme Tsutsuse said she was motivated to help the homeless when she learned there was no shelter in the county.

"They are regular people, and if I can help them out, there is no reason for me not to," Tsutsuse said.

She put up fliers and started collecting winter clothes and blankets at the El Dorado Hills school.

Such efforts, large and small, may increase as jurisdictions look for creative solutions to a growing problem and private citizens begin to see themselves in the faces of the homeless.

Just ask Vanessa Dillon.

"Most people have a stigma about homeless people," said Dillon. "Especially in this economy, we'll have more people become homeless. We're not just bums and drunks."

Call The Bee's Diana Lambert, (916) 478-2672.

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mstrand wrote on 01/26/2009 07:13:58 AM:

How much more money would be available to help the homeless and dish out more food if homeless people all carried easily-acquired mess kits with them so then service providers wouldn't assume they should also buy disposable plates & utensils? What if we implemented a tax on empty bedrooms?

[Recommend \(0\)](#)

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Abaco wrote on 01/26/2009 07:04:12 AM:

Given the recent economic collapse, mostly brought about by the greed of the derivatives traders and Madoff scam artists on Wall Street, more of us are close to this lifestyle than we realize. Good article here. This is what happens when a mass ripping off of the citizens' savings is allowed. Until recently it seemed that a majority of these folks were in this situation due to drug abuse. Doesn't seem like that anymore.

[Recommend \(0\)](#)

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deaconmikee wrote on 01/26/2009 06:48:21 AM:

Get them indoors! Just the savings in health related problems would pay for shelter costs. Add some social service support and try then to get to the root of each person's issues, the very ones that cause them to be homeless in the first place. Hire some of them to actually run the shelter facility. The cost is low and the results could be astronomical.

[Recommend \(1\)](#)

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valley_sol_surfer wrote on 01/26/2009 06:38:40 AM:

...about time EL Dorado County started pulling its own weight instead of busing the homeless to the valley

[Recommend \(0\)](#)

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FAQWUN wrote on 01/26/2009 06:26:44 AM:

Alexis say tomorrow you were told that you no longer could access you money in your account and now you have no job. If we completely hit bottom

thats what you possibly looking at. I truely hope it never gets that far, but things are not looking so good right now. Can you make it? Money going out with no accountability and we can not keep up with it much longer.

[Recommend \(1\)](#)

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worldnet wrote on 01/26/2009 06:24:32 AM:

RE Vanessa Dillion: The once world famous Vineyard House in Coloma was owned by her family? Someone help this woman out and get her to tell her story. She might make some money. To the uninformed, this place might be registered as a historical monument. And, the jail downstairs has quite a history. It is said to be haunted. Anyone who has ever eaten, had fun during Halloween, or stayed in the grand hotel there knows hers must be a sad story. Bee: find out more.

[Recommend \(3\)](#)

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happyboy72848 wrote on 01/26/2009 06:15:37 AM:

The numbers of the homeless are going to go up, and the funds to help them out are going to go down. We may be spiraling towards full-scale economic depression, and homelessness and hungry people are going to become more and more noticeable in public. Thank God for the humanity of those people who understand, that but for the grace of God go they. Those are the people who often times try to lend a hand, to those who cannot help themselves. Thanks to them, the churches, relief agencies, food banks, and private donars, who are joining to keep the homeless and hungry alive. God bless them all.

[Recommend \(3\)](#)

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FAQWUN wrote on 01/26/2009 06:13:13 AM:

alexis I say this is the future for alot of people that never in their wildest dreams would ever think they would be homeless. I think you still have some bums out there that never have any intention of working. But there is change a drift where we are seeing families now. We are quickly approching over the 10% unemployeement mark. Some are saying by the end of summer were more likely looking at 15% and above. There is almost a civil war getting ready to blow up in Mexico and we have even more immigrants running into the US to get out of it. People are less likely to give housing to a single mother with

children and one job if the mother might not have a job in a few months. Its the sign of times coming. Look todays lay offs? Every day now thousands of people being laid off. And ima yes I also think the ones 50 to 55 are targets also as they are getting close to retirement and its cheaper to get rid of them. Rich will get richer and the middle class will get poorer.

[Recommend \(5\)](#)

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imaami wrote on 01/26/2009 05:49:57 AM:

Looking at the homeless population you will notice that they are people in their late 40s and up. We have so many programs helping needy families with young children and pregnant woman, legally here and not. But we do not have programs to help the lonely people that are beyond child baring age.

[Recommend \(2\)](#)

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jmunday wrote on 01/26/2009 04:59:00 AM:

countys refuse to relax codes to allow for housing of people in this position.Wake up supervisors this is not going to end for a while get off your bum and be proactive..

[Recommend \(5\)](#)

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