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## **YWCA Greater Newburyport Teams With Amesbury Council On Aging For One Night Homeless Count**

Newburyport, MA -- The YWCA Greater Newburyport, in collaboration with the Amesbury Council on Aging, conducted this year's annual One Night Homeless Count on January 26th. The One Night Homeless Count is the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) official census of homeless people throughout the country. Volunteers from both agencies went into the communities of Amesbury, Newbury, Newburyport, Rowley and Salisbury to conduct the count.

"This year, we saw the first significant decline in the number of homeless individuals counted. Primarily, this was because of a decrease in the number of children reported as homeless by the school districts," says John Feehan, Executive Director of the YWCA. In 2012, the schools reported 213 students as homeless and this year, that number decreased to 102. Overall, the count decreased from 361 to 285.

However, there has also been an increase in the number of homeless seniors and homeless individuals living in cars or on the street. According to Courtney Hutchinson, Assistant Director of the Amesbury Council on Aging, "the number of seniors that are homeless, or in immediate danger of becoming homeless, is on the rise. During the One Night Homeless Count, we identified 16 seniors in the Amesbury area, twice as many as last year".

The true number of homeless seniors is likely much higher, due to the housing affordability crisis that is affecting all age groups, but especially older adults who are on fixed incomes. "Our senior population has to make extremely difficult choices each month as to whether they eat, take their medications or pay rent," says Hutchinson.

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“Even with the Social Security Cost of Living increase, many are being evicted or voluntarily looking for other places to live. Unfortunately, shelters simply cannot meet the needs of individuals in their 80’s and 90’s so many could end up on the street.”

Another indicator of the seriousness of the situation is an increase in the number of homeless people being served by local social service agencies. “Counting homeless households in this area is very difficult,” says Feehan. “Homeless households hide in plain sight by doubling up with friends or family or living in seasonal rental properties. These people are technically homeless because they have no permanent place to stay.”

“It is significant that 112 children in total were counted as homeless -- moving and changing schools regularly places an extreme burden on these students, their families and the school districts that serve them,” Feehan adds.

Margaret McCarthy, President of the YWCA Greater Newburyport noted that “YWCA was very proud to open 10 new units of affordable housing in Newburyport last year. But these numbers show that we need to build significantly more if we are going to make even a small dent in addressing the issue. YWCA believes providing affordable housing meets our mission of eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.”

The One Night Homeless Count is conducted nationally on the last Wednesday of January. HUD uses this data to allocate resources throughout the country.

For more information about the YWCA of Greater Newburyport, visit [www.ywcagreaternewburyport.org](http://www.ywcagreaternewburyport.org).