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Panel presents on homelessness hoping to raise awareness



By Ryan Sjoberg

Updated: Feb. 25, 2020 at 7:49 PM CST



MANKATO, Minn. (KEYC) — Homelessness is an issue most if not all states and communities have to deal with.

Often referred to as the “invisible population,” they want to be a part of the community.

“I still run into people who say there aren’t homeless people here and just because you don’t see them walking down the street doesn’t mean they aren’t here,” Lutheran Social Services Program Manager Tasha Moulton said.

“Homelessness looks different for every single person and family. It is not always visible. It’s not like what you see in the big cities,” added Jen Theneman, executive director of Partners for Affordable Housing.

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According to [Minnesota’s 2019 Point and Time Count](#), 7,977 people were homeless in Minnesota.

Approximately 21% of the population are unsheltered, living mostly outside while 79% are sheltered whether that’s couch hopping, doubling up in a home or apartment or at a homeless shelter.

“I don’t know if we will ever have enough space or money for people experiencing homelessness. There just aren’t enough beds. Even across the state

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This makes it a lot more difficult to actually see the issue at hand.

"A lot of our people experiencing homelessness are in their cars. A lot of them you may notice walking through the downtown corridor, that's fairly common. It's fairly hidden, people are tucked away kind of out of places and often moved along so there aren't really places to congregate where you're going to see a mass quantity of people experiencing homelessness," described Erica Koser, pastor and co-director at Connections Shelter.

When people know there is a problem, awareness rises and people get involved.

To help facilitate that, VINE Faith in Action presented a panel talking on the matter, talking about the homelessness climate in Minnesota.

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"I'm just really glad that this community is willing to talk about the problem. We aren't ignoring it. That is a step in the right direction for all of us." stated Bethlehem Lutheran Church Associate Pastor Collette Broady Grund.

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