

From the Cupertino Courier:  
[www.community-newspapers.com/cupertino\\_courier](http://www.community-newspapers.com/cupertino_courier)

## **Making sure the local homeless count**

**Feb. 7, 2007**

**By Cody Kraatz**

"I feel sorta like I'm on Cops doing this," says Gary Bouchard, cruising through parking lots before dawn. His eyes scan the dark corners and alleyways, behind dumpsters and under bushes.

He and his driver, Nadine Hutchinson, circle through Kohl's unlit parking lot on El Camino Real in Sunnyvale looking for homeless people on the move or rising from their sleeping spots.

A man in a parked car stirs and turns on his headlights, probably startled by what resembles a patrolling cop, the two say.

"Should we mark him down?" Hutchinson asks.

"Yep," says Bouchard, a former homeless person who remembers sleeping upright in his truck. It's about 5:30 a.m.

An hour earlier, approximately 10 volunteers had shown up at Cupertino Community Services for the 2007 Homeless Street Count, which provides a baseline measure of the number and characteristics of homeless living in Santa Clara County to help policy makers target their services and apply for federal funds.

"The work you are going to do is going to directly impact CCS and the work that we do with the homeless," Jacquy Carey, housing coordinator for CCS, tells the volunteers.

"It dispels the myth that there are no issues of concern in the West Valley area or in Cupertino," says CCS executive director Naomi Nakano-Matsumoto. "When I talk to people and tell them that there are homeless in Cupertino, they are very surprised. By having this formal count taken, it will verify what we already know anecdotally."

The census also helps CCS tailor its services and apply for much-needed outreach funding by identifying whether there are more women, children or men and where exactly people are sleeping.

Organizers will collect more detailed surveys during February and say they expect to release the final results in April, they said.

Count organizer Holly Maclure, with Applied Surveys Research, assigns Bouchard and Hutchinson to three zones and gives other volunteers similar assignments. There are 24 zones to be covered in Cupertino, Sunnyvale and parts of Los Altos Hills, Saratoga, Campbell and Monte Sereno by 9:30 a.m.

Maclure reminds volunteers to be efficient with their time and not to approach any homeless people they find. Their job is not to contact or disturb the homeless or to search the bushes in the dark, just to observe, she says.

Bouchard and Hutchinson spot their second homeless person around 5:45 a.m., and several more around 6 a.m., standing at bus stops along El Camino Real in Sunnyvale.

"Here in Cupertino with the police you don't see anybody out before 6. That's when the shelters let out," says Bouchard, who is now a property manager for CCS. "They ride that 22 all night long," he says, referring to the Valley Transit Authority's route 22 that runs between downtown San Jose and Menlo Park.

"I guess when the driver wants to take a break he tells them all to get off, and then they just get back on," adds Hutchinson.

For trained eyes, homeless are not hard to distinguish from the other people out walking or waiting for buses before the sun comes up.

"You can tell by their knapsack with a change of clothes, and by the way they're all bundled up," says Hutchinson, a program manager at CCS since 2001.

"You get a little more upper-class homeless in Cupertino, if you can say that. You don't get the same type of people as you get in downtown San Jose," says Hutchinson. "They could be walking down the street, and you wouldn't even know they were homeless. Some of them are employed and just down on their luck."

### **Cold coffee in a parking lot**

As Hutchinson drives into the parking lot of St. Jude's Episcopal Church on Stelling Road in Cupertino, she recognizes Paul Beatty, a CCS client who stayed the night before at CCS's rotating shelter.

The sun hasn't come up yet, but the shelter closed about a half hour earlier at 6 a.m. so Beatty is standing by his Volvo station wagon drinking cold coffee from a mason jar.

He has been living out of his car and the CCS shelters for 18 months since he was evicted in 2005 from a room in Sunnyvale.

Beatty, who came from Washington state in 1981, has a degree in industrial technology from Eastern Washington University and learned drafting at Heald College, a skill that has since become obsolete with the advent of computer design software.

He has no cash and a \$12,000 Visa card balance to pay down.

Beatty, who turned 59 in November, would like a job that involves people skills and face-to-face interaction, he said, mentioning Trader Joe's as a possibility.

"But I want to go into it with some support. I want to have outside support while I'm getting a job," says Beatty, mentioning the job search and housing services offered by CCS.

He drove a school bus for the Sunnyvale School District for three years, but left the job in 2004 because he didn't have a special driver's license and he was "too overwhelmed" to get the license.

He worked at Goodwill Industries for about five months in Mountain View but could not cope with the physical work, the noise and the customers.

One of the challenges for homeless job seekers is personal hygiene and appearance.

"The showers at the YMCA are free, but at a cost," Beatty says. He is lucky enough to have a car, but a homeless person on foot or on the bus could spend a lot of time just getting to a place to take a shower.

"This is all an energy drain when you're supposed to be spending energy looking for a job," says Beatty of the homeless daily routine.

### **Staying safe and healthy**

Many shelters are far worse than where Beatty is staying now. He believes the Salvation Army shelter on Fourth Street in San Jose has become unsafe and considers the National Guard armory in Sunnyvale as a "last resort."

"The armory is a disrespectful place to stay. A lot of the people in charge do a lot of yelling in the morning to motivate people to get up," says Beatty, who is quiet and passive. "People who are staying there are already pretty down, so I don't think they need people yelling at them."

Beatty says he goes to the unemployment office regularly to look for a job and file for unemployment.

In 1984, Beatty began therapy with his own money and on his own initiative. He's been prescribed several medications for his mental disabilities, but he has no medical insurance.

Though he served in the Washington National Guard from 1972 to 1976, Beatty does not qualify for Veterans Affairs medical assistance because he was not active duty long enough.

"To my understanding I can't just go out to the VA," he says. Instead, he goes to Valley Medical Center, which is run by the county and provides health care to low-income clients.

"It's actually pretty affordable today," says Beatty, who pays about \$20 per visit. "Actually, I'm in pretty good health." But, he adds, there are preventive medical examinations he knows he needs at his age.

### **His comfort zone**

Beatty's car is filled with mail, trash, papers, food wrappers and plastic bags, but he is careful to lock it when he parks it so no one can take what little he has. He explains that he has a hard time throwing things away, something he thinks stems from anxiety about his life situation.

He expects to be living this way for the next couple of years, and would like to stay around Cupertino.

"This area is more my comfort zone," says Beatty, who still receives mail and uses the phone at a friend's house in Sunnyvale.

In 2004, the census found 7,646 homeless people in the county. Of those, 101 were counted in Cupertino, about 1 percent of the total, and 420 were counted in Sunnyvale, 5.5 percent of the total.

During a recent cold spell in Cupertino, the city activated its Emergency Operations Center to distribute 120 blankets to the homeless in the city, a number city spokesman Rick Kitson said some people thought was insufficient.

"There's always that real and likely fear that we missed a part of that population, and considering the temperatures and what's at stake, you hope you missed as few as possible," Kitson says.