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Youth shelter expands hours

Anthony House reaches out to homeless

By Mark Curnutte
mcurnutte@enquirer.com

The number of homeless teens and young adults in the region is fluid and difficult to count, but as cold, dangerous weather approaches, one shelter is expanding its hours in the hope of leading them to the help they need.

The Anthony House drop-in center for 18- to 24-year-olds, run by Lighthouse Youth Services in Corryville, started its extended hours Monday. The center will be open 1-6 p.m. Monday through Friday, more than doubling its previous hours of operation.

Although not an overnight shelter, Anthony House - at 2728 Glendora Ave., a block from Short Vine - will provide a meal at 4 p.m. each weekday.

Young adults also can take a shower, wash clothing, receive personal hygiene products, see a nurse and work with staff on longer-term needs such as job interviewing and registering for social service benefits.

The new hours are the result of \$103,000 from Impact 100 Cincinnati, a group of female philanthropists pooling their resources for greater effect.

"The need for services to these young, homeless adults is increasing," said Bob Mecum, Lighthouse president and CEO.

The populations in the homeless age groups of 18-24 and 25-30 were a combined 1,317 in 2008 in Hamilton County. Lighthouse has 500 people ages 18-24 register each year for services at Anthony House.

Across Boone, Campbell and Kenton counties in Northern Kentucky, the estimated number of homeless people 18-22 is 360, said Kate Arthur, youth services program coordinator for Brighton Center.

Brighton Center operates the Homeward Bound Shelter for homeless youths under 18. It has 160 spots in its transitional living program that is designed to take young adults out of shelters - the Emergency Cold Shelter and Fairhaven Rescue Mission, both in Covington - and get them into apartments.

"These should be stabilized people, but they aren't," Arthur said. "Why: lack of education, dysfunctional families, mental health issues. Even the ones who have a GED can't get a job. The entry-level jobs aren't there anymore."

These young adults live in what Arthur calls a "vicious cycle. ... They can only stay in the shelter for 14 days. Landlords want a history of four paychecks. We don't have enough time to help them create a work history to get them into a low-income house. And low-income housing isn't really low-income enough if you're working 20 hours a week at McDonald's."

Some families - one- and two-parent households alike - are kicking out their 18-year-old children because they can't afford to care for them, Arthur said.

"Somebody has lost a job," she said, "and they tell the kid to get out and grow up."

Many young people living that lifestyle also suffer from drug or alcohol problems. Others will stay with friends in already unstable living conditions - sleeping on a couch.

"We're seeing and hearing about more (homeless young people) trading sex for housing - but those things always go bad," said Lighthouse's Hollenbach.

Anthony House wants to increase its contact with homeless young people and draw more of them into its direct services. Then, Hollenbach said, "we can get them into substance-abuse treatment, mental health services, to Legal Aid."

Some of those resources will be explained in a formal program each day at 5 p.m. at Anthony House.

Additional Facts

For help

For information about Lighthouse Youth Services' Anthony House in Corryville, call 513-569-9500.

For information about youth services offered by Brighton Center in Covington, call 859-491-8303, ext. 2104.
