



NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES
Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

Project Homeless Connect: Using Citizen Engagement to Serve the Homeless
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Speakers:

Mary Ellen Hombs, deputy director, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness
Judith Klain, director, Project Homeless Connect, City of San Francisco, Calif.
Mike Dunthorn, project manager, City of Knoxville, Tenn.

HOLSCLAW: Thank you. I want to welcome everyone. My name is Abby with the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families. You are listening to "Project Homeless Connect: Using Citizen Engagement to Serve the Homeless." The event is hosted by the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families and kindly sponsored by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. I hope that everyone has experienced no technical difficulties logging on today. I want to mention if for any reason you are having technical difficulties please feel free to call 202-626-3049 and Bobbye Vechik can assist you with any problems that you're having. We highly recommend that you listen through your computer speakers, but if that doesn't work we encourage you to call the toll free number 1-800-391-2548 and the pass code is National League of Cities. We're very please to bring you the web seminar today. The National League of Cities is very impressed with Project Homeless Connect and we have a great line-up of speakers for you to give you a glimpse of what Project Homeless Connect is. And I hope by the end of today's call you'll be inspired to start this type of effort in your community. We know here at the National League of Cities that national data shows that 1% of the United States population experiences homelessness each year. That's an estimated 2.8 million people. And chronic homelessness is visible to all of us in our communities and municipal leaders across the country really understand what this costs at the local level.

We are so glad that all of you and municipal officials across the country are embracing the model of Project Homeless Connect and quite frankly doing something about this problem. We're also very encouraged that the model really reaches out to not only the usual suspects of community-based organizations and perhaps faith-based groups, but really encourages businesses, corporations, and others to become involved. I also want to underscore that you don't have to be a San Francisco or really large city to be engaged in this type of effort. We have a variety of examples from cities across the country that vary in size and geographic

location. I thought it might be important to point out a few of those examples. They include I think St. Paul, Minnesota, where Mayor Chris Coleman and the St. Paul Police Department took the lead in organizing a Project Homeless Connect Day just this past June. And more than 20 organizations came together to sponsor the event. It drew hundreds of volunteers and over 70 service providers offered assistance to chronically homeless individuals in the community. In Norfolk, Virginia, actually very recently on August 24th they hosted their second Project Homeless Connect Day in partnership with the United Way and 65 local, state, federal, and community organizations. Over 500 volunteers came together to help over 600 homeless individuals attain housing, employment, medical, and social services. We're very excited and have many more examples that I plan to share with you. I am hoping that you'll find the call very informational and I want to take a moment to introduce our speakers.

I have with me on the line, Judith Klain, Director of Project Homeless Connect in the City of San Francisco. She's worked for the city in the Department of Public Health since 1994 and she was asked in September by the mayor's office to develop a new way of providing services to reach homeless clients. Thus San Francisco's Project Homeless Connect was born and she's been spearheading this effort ever since. I also have on the line with us today, Mary Ellen Hombs who is the Deputy Director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. And she has more than 25 years of public policy, direct service, and technical assistance experience in homeless advocacy and programs at the local, state, and national level. She's also the author of several books and articles on homelessness, including *American Homelessness*. So welcome to both Judith and Mary Ellen. And I am also delighted to introduce Mike Dunthorn who is a Project Manager for the City of Knoxville, Tennessee. He staffed the implementation office for the Knox County 10-year plan to end chronic homelessness. He was the vice chair of this task force that wrote Knoxville's plan and he's been the coordinator for continuing care for Knoxville and Knox County for the past six years. He was instrumental in last year's Project Homeless Connect Day in Knoxville, Tennessee, and is involved in the 2006 events that are being planned.

So welcome to all of the speakers. I hope you find the information that they're going to share with you today very helpful. I wanted to quickly just run through the agenda and give you a glimpse of where we plan to go in our time together during the next hour and fifteen minutes. We will first hear from Judith in the City of San Francisco who I hope gives you a very solid grounding on what are we talking about. What is Project Homeless Connect and what has San Francisco done? I should point out that during Judith's presentation we will show a video. If you are only dialing into the call and not utilizing the website, you will not be able to hear the video. The video and the recording will be available on our website after the call, but you will hear a period of silence if you have only dialed in by phone and are not using the Live Meeting software. So I just wanted to make that disclaimer.

We will next hear from Mary Ellen Hombs who will talk about the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness' effort to take this model across the country and to provide technical assistance to cities that are interested in adopting Project Homeless Connect. And they've even launched a National Project Homeless Connect Week that Mary Ellen will tell you more about. Finally, Michael will talk about the City of Knoxville, Tennessee's, efforts and I hope it gives you yet another example of how one city has heard about Project Homeless Connect, taken it home, and customized it for their local needs.

We will have a question and answer period. I would encourage you to send in questions as they pop into your head; feel free to send those along. We will have a Q&A period and we will go through as many questions as time allows. If you are unable to log onto the

website and want to ask a question via phone, I will provide instructions when we get to the Q&A section that will allow you to do that. So I want to now move to just a couple of really quick poll questions that will give us the chance to find out how many people are listening in today. So if you have a moment and could vote, I'll be happy to post what we're seeing. I am wondering how many of you have others around your table listening in. I know several were planning to do this. So I'll just give you one more second and we're close the polls. Alright, great, we're going to show the results. Terrific, it sounds like we have several people that have more than one person listening around the table. So I really appreciate the opportunity that you've taken to collaborate in your community and bring others together.

I now have another question about what's your role and I realize that some of you have many people around the table, but if you can select the majority of who is sitting around the table and tell me if you're city staff, elective officials, with a nonprofit organization or perhaps with a for-profit corporation. So it looks like we have a lot of city and county agency staff. I see elected officials, several community-based organizations. Alright great, well that just helps us give a chance to see who's on the line. Again, I appreciate your participation and hope you find this helpful. So let's get started. I am going to turn the line over to Judith who is going to do a really brief introduction to a video that is very moving and powerful. And I hope it gives you just a small glimpse of what San Francisco and Mayor Gavin Newsome is doing.

KLAIN: Thanks. Actually it looks like your video is going on, I'll make comments afterwards.

HOLSCLAW: Okay.

[Pause for video to play]

HOLSCLAW: Great, I am now going to turn the line over to Judith. I hope you were able to see that. If you didn't have Flash installed in your computer you might not and you might have only heard the audio. So I apologize if you weren't able to view the full video, but now I want to turn this presentation over to Judith who can tell you more.

KLAIN: Hi everybody. This is actually a video that was done pro bono for us by a local university and it's been something that I use when I try to go and get more volunteers involved in Project Homeless Connect. And I encourage all of you to maybe look at using a similar tool. I continue to be incredibly moved every time I watch this video. So I am just going to talk a little bit about our own project and how we began and where we're at today. And a little bit about what it takes to do a project. So just a little history about San Francisco: on any given day there are 6,000 to 15,000 homeless people in San Francisco. 3-4,000 of them are chronically homeless - those people that you see out on the street corner day in and day out for the last 10 to 20 years. More homeless people die in San Francisco than Chicago and New York put together. And when there was a poll done before the last election, homelessness was considered the number one issue for San Franciscans.

So subsequently our mayor has very seriously been deeply committed to finding ways to address homelessness in San Francisco. Shortly after he was elected at the end of 2004 he called together various city and county departments that are primarily responsible for providing preventive services for homelessness. One month later Project Homeless Connect was

born. So we had a very short time to pull together our first project. Our first event was really small. We had basically five city workers at five different sites: a doctor, a social worker, a mental health professional, someone helping people find out if they're eligible for county benefits and someone who handed out an incentive to get people to the service site. We were located in five very small SRO hotel lobbies in the Tenderloin, which is the area in San Francisco where most of homeless people are. The rest of us combed the streets and encouraged people to come to one of these one-stop shops for services. We were all a bit cynical about this project at first and I think we were pleasantly shocked and surprised when over 500 clients came in for services at these various sites.

This October is our second year anniversary of doing Project Homeless Connect and it'll be our 13th event. Basically, Project Homeless Connect is based on a one-stop shop model that is truly client focused. The goal is to strip away barriers that prevent the hard-to-reach homeless from accessing services. Project Homeless Connect is not the system of care; it's the portal into getting into the system of care. The hope is that perhaps someone will come to the site for a hot meal or be lured by some incentive that we're able to give at the site and because it's so easy to access services that are all in one place, that once they're there we can encourage them to access medical care or go get help from someone that can provide them legal assistance or methadone treatment. And the hope is that they make a connection with a practitioner who then they can go to follow up appointments with and then reenter or enter into our system of care where they can get ongoing care.

Project Homeless Connect is also based on the ideology that government alone cannot solve such a complex issue and that collaboration between the government, the private sector, and ordinary citizens who volunteer their time to this event is crucial to long-term solutions. When we started Project Homeless Connect, we thought that San Franciscans were apathetic about the issues of homelessness, but instead, since we've begun this program, we found that people didn't know what to do and that there was actually pent up compassion. People wanted to help, but didn't know how. Project Homeless Connect gave them a vehicle. At our last event 1,400 volunteers participated and about 30% of our volunteers keep coming back event after event.

Very little government funding is used for Project Homeless Connect. About 90% of the funds come from corporate donations or in-kind services. The mayor very early on when we started the project helped convene several gatherings for CEOs in the private sector to educate them about what we were doing and encouraged them to support this effort. As time went on and we were able to show and publicize our successes we had many other corporations join in. Usually they started with providing volunteers and once they were committed to the project the funds and in-kind donations began rolling in. For example, Lenscrafters provides 250 free eyeglasses at each event. FedEx-Kinkos, pays for the signage and for the forms that we used. S&G Catering pays for 3,000 meals at each event. Deloitte has provided 500 volunteers once a year. Walgreen's provides hygiene kits and we continue to get donations and supports from various corporations.

Project Homeless Connect in San Francisco was set up as independent organization. We now have a 501(c)3 that really facilitates donor giving so that we don't have to rely totally on government funding. A leadership team that is comprised of service providers, volunteers, and clients meets weekly to make improvements in the program and ensure that we continue to stay client-focused and that we don't create more barriers for people to access care. After each event we have a debriefing and the feedback that we get from both the volunteers and

the clients helps us try to make improvements in subsequent events. The outcomes from our events have been truly incredible. So far 12,642 unduplicated homeless clients have attended one of our events. Clients have been connected to 19,003 numbers of services including medical care, mental health, substance abuse services, legal, and housing. 14,792 volunteers have participated in all of our events, including 300 corporations and 250 non-profits. 571 clients have been housed through this effort and the follow-up appointments that we give clients the day after is one incredible outcome. We used to see about a 0-20% show rate in medical appointments for homeless people. Follow-up appointments after Project Homeless Connect has shot up to a 50-70% show rate; which is incredible for this group of clients. Project Homeless Connect has become a national model for assisting the chronically homeless and I think Mary Ellen will talk about this, but over 30 cities and counties have been a product of Project Homeless Connect to date.

HOLSCLAW: Wonderful. Thank you so much Judith. I hope that you were able to see the video. If not, we'll have them at fourth coming instructions on how you might be able to do that. Also I just want underscore that the National League of Cities was impressed with Project Homeless Connect and the model that San Francisco is undertaking. And it sounds like San Francisco is using their model to even launch additional models of service to use and family economic success and other things they're trying to accomplish in their community. I want to turn it over to Mary Ellen Holmes with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homeless who is so kind enough to sponsor this web nard today. I think she'll be able to tell you a bit more about what the agency is doing to spread this model across the country and what technical assistance they have to help you get started if you're interested in doing this. So with that I am going to turn it over to Mary Ellen.

HOMBS: Thanks Abby, and good afternoon everyone. It's great to be here. It's our pleasure at the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness to be here with our partners at the National League of Cities and with Judith Klain and Mike Dunthorn of Knoxville to talk about the 2006 National Project Homeless Connect Week. The National League of Cities has been an excellence partner. Council initiatives include the administration's goal of ending chronic homelessness. The Council, working with its partners and state, county, and city government to forward the goal of ending chronic homelessness, is committed to partnership with every sector including with consumers to the identification and rapid dissemination of innovation such as Project Homeless Connect that help prevent and end chronic homelessness and to the rapid reporting of results. Project Homeless Connect is about all of these. As it created results in San Francisco, Project Homeless Connect has created results all around the nation. In cities large and small, in cities with ten year plans and those not yet started, Project Homeless Connect is working. Project Homeless Connect success, which mayors and county executives are leading, means that this new approach, the approach of ending homeless, not managing it or servicing it, is visible for all sectors of the community. As people across the nation helped other communities just one year ago after Katrina and Rita without being told, without being given direction, it makes perfect sense to create a one-stop site that lowers barriers, increases access, expedites results, and meets the consumer where they are. More than 30 cities have built on this momentum to date and as of today, 38 more have events planned this year. I am going to talk a bit about the innovation and how the Council can support you in planning your event.

The key elements of Project Homeless Connect that attracted the Council's attention are:

- One day one-stop evolving both the Katrina response and the stand down model;
- City Leadership: Visible leadership by mayors and county officials;
- The mobilization of civic will: A new way to create partnerships with people who experience homeless.
- Engagement to end homelessness: A results -oriented approach not replicating the existing system.
- Consumer-centric: Focused on the customer for all of our efforts.

Do you need to have an official ten-year plan to undertake Project Homeless Connect? Virtually every city that you saw in our map does have a plan underway or an implementation, but not every city had their plan first. Minneapolis is a good example. Project Homeless Connect came first for them and their two events helped focus their planning process when it got started. So in the same way that you'll customize Project Homeless Connect to your community in other ways, you'll want to think about how to move forward your existing plan or your ten year planning process through your Project Homeless Connect event.

The key themes of Project Homeless Connect are immediacy, hospitality, and community. The immediacy for the consumer is where Project Connect really shows results. It's important to build immediacy into your services to bring employers on-site, and not simply to resume services or applications, to provide needed exams and data for applications, not just forms to fill out, and to target vouchers and units to house people that day. So think about how you can get results on your Project Homeless Connect Day. Reducing barriers is also the key. Project Homeless Connect with everyone in one place to meet the consumer's needs can reduce both practical and other barriers by bringing solutions on-site. Warrants, debts, or lack of ID all can be barriers to jobs and housing. These services can also be hard to access, practically or psychologically. Bringing them on-site in a solution-oriented way can change that status quo.

Hospitality: This event is all about the consumer's experience and doing business differently. Consumers can help design these services and they know what they want. A lack of pressure and providing choices and food all are making a difference in successful events that say, "welcome." Take the advice of experts like Judith. Hair cuts, pet care, and eyeglasses are all popular everywhere. And new partners need to be part of the mix as well. Project Homeless Connect is showing how to make this happen with business, the media, and civic leaders. How can you recruit some of these new partnerships? The Interagency Council with our 20-member federal agencies and departments can help ensure that your regional federal partnerships are at your Project Connect event ready to take applications for SSI, VA benefits, food stamps, and to provide workforce services, treatment, education, training, and reentry resources. If you're planning a Project Homeless Connect Day, the Council will work with you to bring your federal partnerships on-site to add their services.

What about state agencies? Every state government is part of a federal initiative to reduce barriers and increase access to mainstream programs for homeless people. If you're planning a Project Homeless Connect event, the Interagency Council will work with you to ensure that state agencies are present. It will help your partnership in state and local planning. What about outcomes? The business thinker Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great*, said it best: "Results are infectious." Every successful PHC city will tell you that tracking and reporting data

for their event is helping tell your success story to the media, business, and volunteers. So take the advice of experts - you want to do this and keep doing it. Reporting results reduces skepticism and it builds support. 27 cities have already committed just this summer to join the 2006 National Project Homeless Connect Week this year, starting December 4th and running until December 8th. On behalf of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness we hope you will decide to join them.

If you're asking yourself, do we have enough time left to do this? First of all, the answer is yes. The Council can connect you to cities that have executed successful events with shorter planning timetables. They'll tell you the practical steps that will support your effort. If you want more information you can join us for one of the Council's regular biweekly calls through October. Our next national conference call is September 19th at 1:00 p.m. Eastern. We'll be talking about logistics, data, and sustainability with experts from successful cities. You can also go to the next San Francisco Project Homeless Connect Event on October 5th to see for yourself. You can visit our website at the Council at www.usich.gov for more information, including our 2005 National Day archive and you can contact us directly to get answers to your questions and resources to meet your needs. The email address, you can see at the bottom of the screen, is USICHEvent@usich.gov. Again thanks for joining us today. We look forward to the questions, and I am going to hand it back to Abby.

HOLSCLAW: Thank you so much Mary Ellen. As you can see there's a lot of experience from communities across the country that are engaged in this work and I encourage you, if you get ready to do an event like this or if you're interested, that you reach out to the Interagency Council on Homelessness and utilize the expertise and the resources and templates that they've developed and catalogued that will help give you a real hand up in getting this type of effort off the ground. And speaking of an example, I want to now turn to Michael in Knoxville, Tennessee, who's going to tell you how they approached this and what Knoxville has done to implement a Project Homeless Connect Day.

DUNTHORN: Hi, thank you for inviting me to present what we did in Knoxville. It's been very interesting for us. We did it last year and we're going to do it again this year and the Interagency Council on Homelessness has been a great resource for us. I'll just kind of explain how we got into it. I was actually at the National Alliance to End Homelessness Conference in Washington last summer. And I knew nothing about Homeless Connect, but was drawn into a conference with Phillip Mangano, the head of the Interagency Council, to talk about it and they had a teleconference with folks from San Francisco to tell us what it was. So I listened, I took that back to my mayor in Knoxville and told him about it and he thought it was a pretty good ideal. So he sent me out to San Francisco to see what they were doing, I guess it was the beginning of August.

So using that as an example of how the timeline still can work and we went from zero to actually doing the event in December with that kind of timeline. It really is important that we have the political will. We were in the process of finishing up our ten year plan. We were developing it when I heard about the Project Homeless Connect opportunity. And so I went and learned about it, and in the intervening time, we announced our ten year plan, and the mayor was behind that ten year plan and saw this as a great opportunity. So it had some momentum for us just as soon as we started and here we are doing a great event. So having the

political will is important and we were lucky to have a mayor who's really serious about this issue.

For us, the way we set it up, we followed the San Francisco model fairly similarly. The sponsors of Project Homeless Connect here in the City of Knoxville and Knox County were also both the sponsors of our ten-year plan to end chronic homelessness, and the East Tennessee Coalition for the Homeless also say they want to be involved in this. We want to be a full partner. So they joined us and all I did was announce at a Coalition for the Homeless meeting that we're going to try and do this and set a time that we were going to talk about how; you start it and they come. It was remarkable to me throughout the process. I just scheduled a meeting and people showed up and we started talking about what we wanted to have at it. What was in San Francisco and what would be good for us? If there was something different we wanted, what were those things? And then I just started delegating out areas to people. You take care of volunteers, you take care of transportation, you take care of medical issues, and send people off with their assignments, and then we set up a regular meeting schedule for people to come and discuss where we were and what we needed and just went through this regular process until December.

It was remarkable how easily it comes together because there really is that pent up desire in the community to do something about this issue. For us we had the city, county, and coalition as sponsors - homeless service agencies to a tee. You're all participating and that's partly because of the ten year plan and also partly it has helped our ten year plan move forward because it brings everybody to the table. We also had Remote Area Medical, which is a great organization based out of Knoxville that goes here and really across the world providing free medical services to those in need, and they were happy to be a part of it last year and our partner this year. We have the business community coming in to sponsor things and participate, and churches and the faith community really stepped up. They provided a lot of the resources and a lot of the manpower for us. And we also had, of course, many individual volunteers.

Where are the resources? Well, following San Francisco's model, the city really had very limited costs in this event. This was not something where you had to go to City Council and say, "well we need \$5,000 or \$10,000 to do an event." We just say, hey we're going to do this. We own a facility; in our case it was an old convention center, and we said we've got the facility, we've got me and a few others that can help direct it and everybody else just came and brought their popular piece. So really having that in-kind and volunteer support in the community is everything to make this work. Our ten year plan, as I said, was announced during the development of Project Homeless Connect. Then we saw it as a means for momentum, and Project Homeless Connect was really a means for learning and reinforcing some of the things that we saw in the development of our ten year plan. Coordinated case management was a big issue that came up for us during the development of the ten year plan, and, as we were setting up Project Homeless Connect, we saw once again where that need was because we were trying to figure out how to deal with case management once we were drawing folks in and trying to get them engaged into the system.

It's also very important to us and our ten year plan, of course, is to secure housing for the homeless. So we wanted to see Project Homeless Connect not just as a service fair or just something where people can come and get something and then go out and really be in the same place they were before. We wanted to see Project Homeless Connect as a way to engage somebody somewhere in the system that maybe was unable to get in before and move them toward housing. The mantra that we had last year because we hadn't done this before and I think

for those of you that maybe are just starting out now, it's really important just to say, let's see what we can do. I went and saw all this great stuff San Francisco is doing, but I had no idea coming back how much we would be able to do here in Knoxville. So I just said, let's see what we can do and we'll ask people for things and if they can bring it forward, then they will and boy, they sure did.

For our event we had 350 professionals and volunteers show up at the event and we served 450 clients and by tracking them a month later we had 30 or more people that we know of who were housed as a direct result of something they engaged in at Project Homeless Connect. Some lessons that we learned last time for us is that Fridays are going to work better than a Thursday, because San Francisco likes to use Thursday. For us we have the big medical component and it's hard to get dentist and vision practitioners to drop their practice on a Thursday, but many of them are playing golf on Friday. So we'll come in on Friday and help with that. We saw as we were setting this up in our convention center that there are some bottleneck issues. Some places where people got lined up and spent more time waiting than they needed to. So we're working on ways right now to cure the bottleneck issues. We're going to start earlier in the day than we did last year. As I said, we're going to do more tracking because having those results to show people is really important. So we're going to do more tracking and more follow up to really show the things that we know at least intuitively that are being achieved. We're also going to do more volunteer training ahead of the event. We really just did training in the morning of it and so we're going to do more to get people oriented and ready to go, so that they know what's going on.

And the mantra for this year's Project Homeless Connect is housing, housing, housing. We have our ten year plan in place. We're in the implementation phase and the key to it is housing so we really are going to continue to reinforce that. This event is about connecting people into something that's going to get them housed. We're also going to have housing opportunities at the event, but the idea is not a service fair, it's not something where people can come and just get information about what's available and then you hope they get to it at a later date. It's about having those things available at the event and it's about gearing everything towards moving them into housing. We have continued political will - both the city and county leaders are committed to this and are sponsoring it. Additionally, veterans actually had a separate event about six weeks before Project Connect last year, but this year they're going to have their own section within Project Connect where they can do things in which money and resources have to be targeted towards veteran, but otherwise, they're fully engaging in helping us do what we're doing. So it really is easy to sell a winner and we had a winner last year and really before we started gearing up for this year's Project Connect.

I had people coming to me saying, when are we going to do this? When are we going to get started? We want to do this. So it's been very encouraging to me and surprising to me how easy within my community it was just to say, here's this idea of a way that we can change how we do things in Knoxville and how we can bring folks together and how we can get the homeless off the street and into housing. And people just came forward and said yes we want to be a part of that and made a great event happen.

HOLSCLAW: Michael, thank you so much for sharing Knoxville, Tennessee's example. It is really important, I think from the National League of Cities' standpoint to demonstrate that cities of all sizes across the country are again embracing this model and recognizing that there is something that each community can do to end homelessness and to make a difference. We're

now at a point where I want to again thank you for staying with us. I know this a lot of information. I want to allow an opportunity for you to ask questions and want to quickly just go over a couple of ways you can. At the bottom of your screen you have the ability to submit a question online, please feel free to do that. Those questions will go into a queue and we will take as many of them as we possibly can. I also want to note if you're joining us only by phone or would prefer to ask your question on the phone, you would push *1 and Melissa, our operator, will be able to take your question and again you will be put into a queue and we'll take as many of those questions as we possibly can. I want to answer one question that we've had about are the PowerPoint presentations going to be available? Yes they will, you can email Stephanie Casey Pierce at Pierce@NLC.org. We'll post that as well to our ,and I should also mention that the entire web seminar that we're recording today; hopefully with a video will be available online in the coming week or so, on NLC's website (www.nlc.org/iyef). We'll probably send out an email blast in case you're interested in passing this along to others in your community to share with.

Adrienne has a question for our speakers. About how, perhaps San Francisco, Knoxville, and other cities are able to move client so quickly into permanent housing? What's your recommendation for areas that have limited resources available for permanent housing? That could be maybe for Michael. You talked a little bit about a real focus on housing that's next year. How is Knoxville approaching this? How are you moving people very quickly into housing?

DUNTHORN: Well, again the goal is to do what it is that we can do because we've got our ten year plan in place, and we're working very hard through that process trying to locate housing opportunities whether it's through public housing or whether it's through private development, or as many avenues and angles that we can to locate the housing that is needed. So with the initiative that we have in place, we hope to have some things available at the time of the event so that we can slide folks right into housing. But it really is just a matter of trying to find what it is that you have available and going with it and doing as much as you can. And for those where there's not an opening immediately available, engage them into the system, get them a case manager and get them whatever it is you have available to lock onto them and help them get into something as soon as you can after the fact. The statistic I showed included folks who maybe got hooked into something at the event, but then the housing itself opened up at a later point.

HOLSCLAW: That makes sense Michael, and Judith, for San Francisco where housing is so expensive, I am sure that that's a real challenge. What's been San Francisco's approach to moving people to housing?

KLAIN: It's absolutely challenging for middle class people in San Francisco, but again in our ten year plan our major goal is to increase the housing stock for homeless people. And we've been incredibly successful. Housing in the last few years has increased 138% and that's housing with wrap-around support services for homeless.

HOLSCLAW: That's great Judith, and Adrienne, this continues to be a challenge I think for a lot of cities. So you're certainly not alone. One question we have from Tara is, please describe your volunteer recruitment effort? I think this could be a question for all three of our speakers and Mary Ellen can talk a little bit about what a variety of cities are doing. And I am

significantly interested in perhaps the role that elected officials are playing, and the power of the mayor's office in helping recruit volunteers. Mary Ellen, do you want to start?

HOMBS: I think one thing that we've seen in the variety of cities that have done Project Connect is the ways in which they've effectively used the public sector rolodex if you will to reach out to their corporate and business, neighbors to come on board. Connect offers an opportunity for people who maybe haven't known what to do or how to do it in regard to folks they see on the street, and they can do it with people that they're working with everyday or through civic organizations. So it's one of the ways to leverage the participation of sectors both into the event itself and form ongoing relationships as well. And I think that equally speaks to the housing question that was just asked. This is also about developing new relationships that help address homelessness in the community and I think that's certainly what we've heard from the strong San Francisco model.

HOLSCLAW: Michael how did you all go about recruiting volunteers?

DUNTHORN: We did have a little bit through corporate partners, but then another big part of it for us was again engaging churches and the faith community. And it actually again serves as a way for us to reinforce our ten year plan, and that is why we went through churches to seek volunteers and bring them in and understand what it is we're trying to do that's different in our community. So it provides an opportunity to bring people on board in this event and do things beyond it that are geared towards housing rather than, often-times churches really want to just get out and do a feeding program on a weekend or something like that and that's it for them. So we went out through churches quite a bit and it creates a way to reinforce the message that we're also conveying through our ten year plan.

HOLSCLAW: We have a lot of questions, so I am going to have our speakers keep their answers short, but I am seeing one that really picks up on this question. So before going to Judith, I wanted to ask how many cities do multiple Project Connect events each year. How important is it to do the event more than once a year, and this is sort of a three part question? Is there a chance of burning out volunteers? I know that San Francisco is doing this maybe every, is it every six weeks or something Judith?

KLAIN: Yeah, maybe two months.

HOLSCLAW: Right. So how important is it that there are multiple Project Connect events during the year and what's San Francisco doing to make sure that volunteers aren't burnt out and corporate partners aren't fed up with being asked to participate?

KLAIN: Well, I'll talk about both the negatives and positives to doing the moving. We're actually considering doing this quarterly instead and then monitor what impact that's going to have as far as providing an ongoing way of engaging homeless people. I have to say we've been incredibly fortunate that our volunteer pool just keeps growing and growing. So we haven't gotten to the place yet where we've exhausted our community volunteer pool, but what we are seeing is that our providers and the departments that provide services for homeless will do this day in and day out and are beginning to feel a bit of exhaustion. And that's part of the reason

why we look to go quarterly rather than every other month. One of the biggest, biggest benefits of doing this every other month is, for one it allows us to evaluate the last event and every event becomes better and better. And I think if we only did this once a year, it would be really hard for us to make the system improvements that not only happen on the day of, but also in the system of care. Just because we all meet every two months and we get a chance to share these practices and talk to each other about how to better provide services for homeless people.

HOMBS: I think what we see at the Council when we look at that map and go from San Juan, Puerto Rico, to Denver, Colorado, to Portland, Oregon - probably a third of the cities have done multiple events to date. And there's both a learning curve as Michael and Judith have both described. You figure out a lot on the first one and probably the second and third as well, but when you look at these against the map you also see that these are also the cities that are able to start pointing to results and reducing their population on the streets. And we think there's a direct connection between the evolution of the event, the targeting, and the results that these ten year plans are seeing. So of those who've done more than one event are also targeting their subsequent events, doing a youth connect for example or a family connect as a follow up event.

HOLSCLAW: And actually Mary Ellen that picked up on another question we have about what are the overall homeless populations for San Francisco and Knoxville? And what percentage of the individuals - what's the guestimate percentage of homeless youth that have been served?

KLAIN: I actually have that data. I think I mentioned earlier that guestimates are between 6-15,000 homeless people in San Francisco; 3-4,000 of those are chronic. The numbers for youth are really hard to track. We've seen about 10% of people attending Project Homeless Connect are 24 and under and I would say that we have probably not always been very youth and family friendly. And we're trying to change that and I am assuming we're going to see an increase and we have been seeing an increase in our last two events as we're trying to make this a more family friendly event.

HOLSCLAW: Michael what about Knoxville?

DUNTHORN: For Knoxville, for us we have probably on any given night around 900 homeless people in Knoxville and Knoxville County and roughly 10-20% of that is chronic homeless. And you know we really did not measure the youth percentage at Project Connect, but as I said we want to do more tracking this year.

HOLSCLAW: Okay. You know for our callers on the phone just in case you're not familiar with chronic homelessness or the technical definition, it's long-term or repeated homelessness coupled with a disability. So I just wanted to point that out. These are all things that we've been learning and want to share with you. I appreciate your questions and feel free to keep them coming in. We will go to a few questions that we may have from our online moderator in a moment, but I wanted to post the question to speakers, how are you screening people at the door to determine whether they're homeless or are they just poor and housed or is that a distinction that you're even trying to make?

KLAIN: We actually have a screening tool that we use in the beginning of Project Homeless Connect when a client enters. And we've tried to keep that tool very, very simple, again as bureaucrats or providers. One of the barriers that we may have created is that we expect clients to fill out lengthy forms that sometimes are a disincentive to come to services. So we've made our form pretty quick. It takes about less than five minutes to fill out. We ask them demographic questions and mostly we jump to what are you here for today? What do you want? What do you need?

HOLSCLAW: When you're screening, do you turn people away if they're not "homeless?"

KLAIN : We do ask a question on whether you're homeless or not and we ask people to self-report. There's no way that we can prove whether they are or not. What we've found is about 47% of the people that attend an event self-reports being homeless and we don't turn anybody away.

HOLSCLAW: I see.

DUNTHORN: For Knoxville, we also are not going to turn anyone away. We do ask the question, but one thought that we've been discussing for the upcoming event is through our shelters and programs where we know we're serving the homeless already doing some kind of pre-registration. So that when they come to the event, if they've already been pre-registered we know who they are and perhaps they can get in first and get a priority for the available services. So that we are serving our clients as best we can.

HOLSCLAW: And Michael, that actually leads directly into another question we've had. How do you notify homeless persons on the street about an upcoming Project Connect event? What's the outreach mechanism that both San Francisco and Knoxville use, and then Mary Ellen, in other cities what are some unique approaches that you've seen to getting the word out about the event to actually get people to the location where the event's taking place?

DUNTHORN: For us it was going to the shelters and services that we know already have flyers available and just getting the word out through those facilities. And then we have some street outreach teams and so they were ahead of time getting out and letting people know. And also some of the church organizations that serve the homeless were getting out and letting the folks that they work with know. Apparently it was very effective.

HOLSCLAW: Judith, what about San Francisco?

KLAIN : We have a homeless outreach team that does this work 24/7. And about a week before the event, they flyer the city and let clients know that this event is coming. We also count on our service provider network to spread the word.

HOLSCLAW: And Mary Ellen what about other cities across the country?

HOMBS: Well one thing Michael said earlier about his event is it's easy to sell a winner. Word of mouth is a very proven form of advertising among people who are living out on the

streets. And also the use of people who have formerly experienced homelessness being part of outreach in many places to give real credibility and trustworthiness to folks who may otherwise not choose to come into what they might see as a typical service setting.

HOLSCLAW: One question that we've had posted is a really important one. What do you do and this would be great for probably Judith and Michael to chime in on. What do you do when your local government doesn't acknowledge the problem of homelessness? So what if there's not a Michael or Judith or individuals within the city or perhaps even city leadership that are willing to, at this point in the game, step up and recognize that this is a problem and something that the city should be engaged in trying to do something about it? What advice would you have in how to approach this?

DUNTHORN: Well, I would say if the government itself is not ready to acknowledge it that those of you out in the community who are working with the issue have to pull yourselves together, create a clear message and take it to your government and to the public if you need to appeal to people outside of the governmental system. Create pressure on the government system to acknowledge the issue and do something about it, but I would try and keep it as, if you can, positive of a message as you can, that this is something that we want to do something about and certainly make the government officials feel the need to do so. But if possible, don't make them defensive straight out. Sometimes you have to do that, but if you can engage them in a positive way to work on the issue that would be my suggestion.

HOLSCLAW: And Michael you said you sat down with the mayor after going to San Francisco. Did you use statistics and presentations and perhaps some of the materials that you had there and would you recommend having an elected official go to a Project Homeless Connect to see what's happening? And maybe Mary Ellen, do you have some thoughts on this, too? Is there a helpful strategy to better engage them?

DUNTHORN: Certainly if you can get them there. Seeing it is certainly believing and in my case, the mayor was already I think pre-disposed to the idea. So when I came back I explained really fairly briefly what I saw and said okay let's do it. It wasn't difficult.

HOMBS: I would quote Jim Collins again, that results are infectious. We can point to over 220 communities around the country where mayors and county executives have stepped into some of these initiatives. Many are doing Project Connect events and otherwise trying to achieve results and making a very convincing case in most places. So my advice to people who don't see that support forthcoming yet from their local leadership is to talk to us here at the Council. All of our regional staff is on the phone today. They are the eyes and ears in every local community to help make these initiatives go forward and they can be a great resource to anybody at the local level.

HOLSCLAW: That's great and maybe it would help to talk just a few minutes Judith and Michael about what are the top three roles that elected officials in your city have played? We know here at the National League of Cities that it is helpful to demonstrate that other cities are doing these types of activities. City leaders enjoy knowing what their peers are doing and like to build upon their success.

But are they serving as volunteer recruiters by asking the business community to join the effort? Can you talk just maybe about what you would say some of the top three roles are that an elected official could play in a Project Connect event?

KLAIN: I mean certainly clout and visibility I think are really key. I think if we didn't have our mayor as a part of this, it would have been a lot more challenging to get both the partnerships and media attention that we're able to do.

HOLSCLAW: And Michael what about for you? How has the mayor stepped in and played a role in making the event successful?

DUNTHORN: Having his backing for it with the visibility is important. Having him lends a certain credibility to the event so that the partners that we go to, you know, it becomes easier to ask someone will you support this event. Will you give us thing X? When you can say this is something the mayor has put us to work on and it is important to the city and important to what we're doing on this issue. Certainly having letters signed by the mayor going out to people and asking them to volunteer helps and then as the mayor in San Francisco did, we have our mayor come down and kick off the event and encouraged everyone, and thanked them for what they were doing.

HOLSCLAW: That's great. That's an important point to thank the volunteers. Back to the question about burn out and celebrating something successful. We have many more questions and I'll be able to get to just a few more before we wrap up our call. I promised to keep us on time. I want to post just a couple more questions that I feel are burning, a few which are rather quick. What is the demographic of people who seem to attend the Project Connect events; single, families, children or youth I suppose? What's been your experience?

KLAIN: Are you asking for clients or volunteers?

HOLSCLAW: Clients.

KLAIN: Okay, I can actually just read to you some of our statistics. Certainly who attends Project Homeless Connect mirrors the face of homelessness here in San Francisco. About 40% are African Americans, 2% are Asians, 10% is Hispanic, 3% Native American, 2% Pacific Islander and 33% White. Seventy-three percent are male, 26% female and 1% transgender or other. The average age is 47. About 20% of the people are age 55 and over that attend Project Homeless Connect and the majority is between the ages of 26 and 55. I think I said earlier about 46% say that they either stay outdoors, live in vehicles or in a shelter bed. The others are marginally housed. And then about 3% are veterans and then that's about all the questions we ask on demographics.

HOLSCLAW: That's helpful and I think you mentioned earlier that becoming more family friendly and youth oriented is a goal. So it sounds like you often do have a lot of single individuals versus families. I have several more questions, so I want to throw just two more out there and then I am going to wrap up the call. One is really important. What about Project

Homeless Connect makes it more effective outreach than normal homeless service providers or people being served just through the existing organizations in the community?

KLAIN: I think the one-day, one-stop approach really breaks down a lot of the traditional ways of operating services and makes them both more accessible for an individual and the on and off ramp can be a lot shorter. You can actually accomplish things while you're there. I think we've heard that in city after city where being able to get a voucher or finish that application or actually have the exam that helps you qualify for the benefits can all be done at once. And I don't say this in a flip way, and you can get a hair cut. These are very important things for folks who are often living outside or don't have other access to services. And it's probably equal parts the mayor welcoming you as a homeless neighbor and the volunteer who is prepared to take you where you want to go in that one-stop center for the day that make it more effective because it really is focused on the individual.

HOLSCLAW: That's helpful and something that was said earlier for the callers on the line that I don't think could be more importantly underscored is that it gives the opportunity for the community to see the need and the opportunity to serve and be engaged. And I think that educational opportunity in itself, especially to the business community and corporations that the mayor has been so successful in recruiting to be part of the event can be priceless. So I encourage you to think about that and to think of the usual suspects to involve in this as the mayor has.

One of the final questions we have which of course no initiative or project could not have this be part of the conversation is the cost. What are the costs to host one of these events? I am sure it varies across the country depending upon ones resources and who your partners are, but just on average. Judith, Mike, and then also Mary Ellen what are you seeing range-wise across the country? What should one be prepared to fundraise for or to try to provide as an actual cost to host an event?

KLAIN: Well, when we first started there was actually, I would say outside of city and country salaries, there was zero cost to this event. We have grown a bit and we provide some services that now we fundraise for. So for example we subsidize helping people get IDs and we actually subsidize additional stabilization rooms that we help get people into after Project Homeless Connect. But primarily the space is free. The food is free. The incentives are free. The providers come, there's no cost to that. So we've really be able to keep our cost down and only because of our fundraising efforts have we actually started to pay for things that we're able to provide now.

HOLSCLAW: Michael, what about Knoxville?

DUNTHORN: For us we're actually in the earlier stage that she described there. The space was free because the city owns it. The professionals who come there are working on that day anyway, so that's not overtime or anything like that. The meal is provided by a church; medical services are provided by Remote Area Medical.

HOLSCLAW: Minimum costs in other words?

DUNTHORN: In fact it is really not much.

HOLSCLAW: And Judith is this the trend you see across the country that people aren't sinking lots of dollars into each of these events, but really people are stepping up with in-kind resources?

KLAIN: I hope so. That's certainly been our experience here in San Francisco.

HOLSCLAW: That's great. I think that's a great message for participants that are on the call that this doesn't have to cost a lot of money to really be successful. Well we have one poll question that I want to pose. You've had the opportunity to be part of this call today and I really can't thank you enough for being with us and learning about the model that San Francisco has put forth. I am interested to know whether or not you plan to implement a Project Homeless Connect in your community. Hopefully this has given you a glimpse of what Project Connect is. The model can be used to provide other types of services to different populations. So consider that if perhaps the homeless are not your target population. I see and I'll post these results here that 46% of you aren't sure, but it sounds like 34%, a large portion, of you are interested, but haven't quite yet started your planning. And then about 13% already have a Project Homeless Connect in your community. So I appreciate your advice. We do have one person that's not been convinced yet. So feel free to post your question if that can be helpful. I want to lastly give you some contact information for Mary Ellen, Judith, and Michael who the National League of Cities is indebted to for their time today in preparing for this web seminar and being with us.

I should note that the Institute for Youth, Education, and Families appreciates the opportunity to bring this model to you. It's actually not a population we've been focused on before. So this is our first take at focusing on homeless individuals in a concentrated way and we hope that you share our enthusiasm for San Francisco's effort.

So to my speakers, thank you so much. To my call participants, please do look for the web seminar to be posted to our website in the coming weeks. I hope that you will share that with your colleagues and partners in your community, if you think it's something that they would be interested in. I encourage you to reach out to us if you have any additional questions and I have a good rest of your week. Thanks so much, bye-bye.