

Project Homeless Connect Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

FAQ for Project Homeless Connect (PHC) contains answers to commonly asked questions that will help to understand the transition process for PHC for Lane County.

Why did PHC start? After returning from a Leadership Summit on Ending Homelessness in Portland in 2006, Project Homeless Connect (PHC) was conceived as a community-based event. Following a summit presentation on "Project Homeless Connect/Portland style," Commissioner Faye Stewart, Mayor Kitty Piercy, Susan Ban (ShelterCare), Laurie Trieger (then at Food for Lane County), Richie Weinman (then at the City of Eugene) and Pearl Wolfe (Lane County Human Services Commission and a United Way volunteer, met to consider what it might take to stage PHC locally.

What were the goals?

- 1) To improve the health and well being of those who are homeless in our community by providing a broad array of services in one place at one time for our community's homeless guests. These services were a demonstration of community caring and respect.
- 2) To engage the community to volunteer, and in doing so, provide an education in a way that humanized each of our homeless neighbors and increase community supports for efforts that combat poverty and address homelessness.
- 3) An unplanned outcome was to connect the hundreds of service providers at the event (who previously only knew each other by name or through email) to meet face-to-face and enhance their working relationships as a result.

How effective was the event?

Quite effective. Five PHC events took place serving 1,007 individuals at the first PHC in 2007 to the largest attendance of 1,595 guests at the last PHC 2011. *In addition*, the final event drew 805 volunteers, 378 service and business providers offered 106 categories of services. The event was supported by 175 cash and in-kind donors. PHC showed growth each year in terms of people served, community involvement, volunteers and services. It became one of the most remarkable community events ever staged in Lane County and everyone who touched it was proud of their involvement.

Why stop now if the event is such a success?

Five years was a good point to stop and re-evaluate. As resources for government partners and local non-profits have dwindled, PHC leadership met in June 2011 to pause and look at the event's future. As a result of decreased resources and staff time available to organize PHC 2012, challenges were discussed openly.

What are the challenges to continuing PHC? These were the challenges: long term leadership stepping down, concern about competing for financial resources with struggling non-profits, and much less staff time for service providers and organizers in the wake of budget reductions. PHC is a labor intensive event which requires approximately four months of solid planning to implement.

Homelessness hasn't ended. What's next? We are gathering the PHC leadership, the team leaders and area leaders to look at other homeless initiatives that might have long term impacts, but are not as costly in time and resources to organize.

How can we still help? We want to encourage community members to continue to support organizations that work to end homelessness. Make a cash or in kind donation or volunteer at ShelterCare, St. Vincent DePaul, White Bird, Catholic Community Services or Looking Glass. Help at the Egan Warming Center (the extreme weather shelter) or contact St. Vincent dePaul and volunteer at the Interfaith Family Shelter program.