



Facts About Homelessness in Lake County



18

Average Number of Years Living in Lake County



62%

Percent Who Reported Family in Lake County



55%

Percent First-Time Homeless



53%

Percent Who Said a Lake County Fire Caused Their Homelessness

Source: 2020 Point-in-Time Survey of Homelessness in Lake County

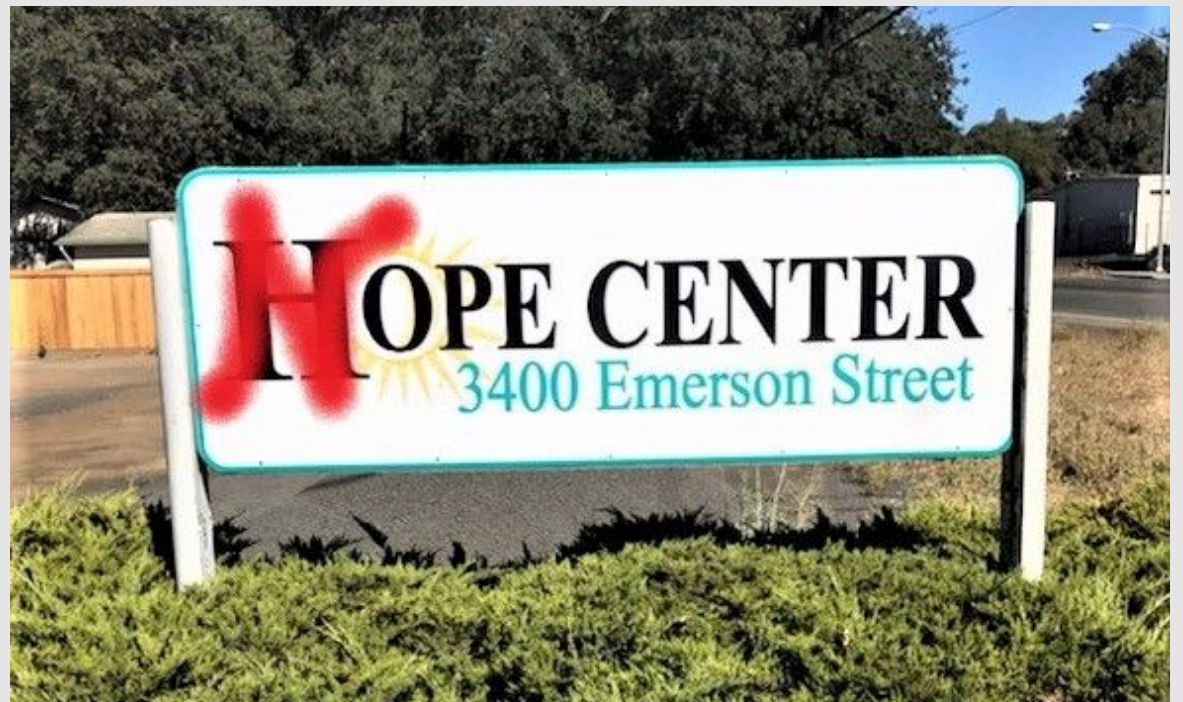
From 'Nope' to 'Hope'

We were frustrated. It seemed like we'd run into every conceivable roadblock in building the Hope Center, Lake County's first transitional housing center. Despite being in the midst of the county's worst homeless and housing crisis, construction for the Hope Center had stalled out, along with our spirits.

Just as we gathered at the site to discuss next steps, we saw our sign had been vandalized. "Hope" had been painted over to "Nope." We weren't angry. We were sad. The vandal's pun resonated after months of disappointment.

Discouraged and frustrated, we dragged ourselves to our meeting, eventually noticing a woman walking the property peering through windows. She knocks and asks to speak to someone in charge.

"It was me," she says forlornly. "I painted over your signs. I want to make it right." She then grabs a bucket and brush and starts scrubbing away.

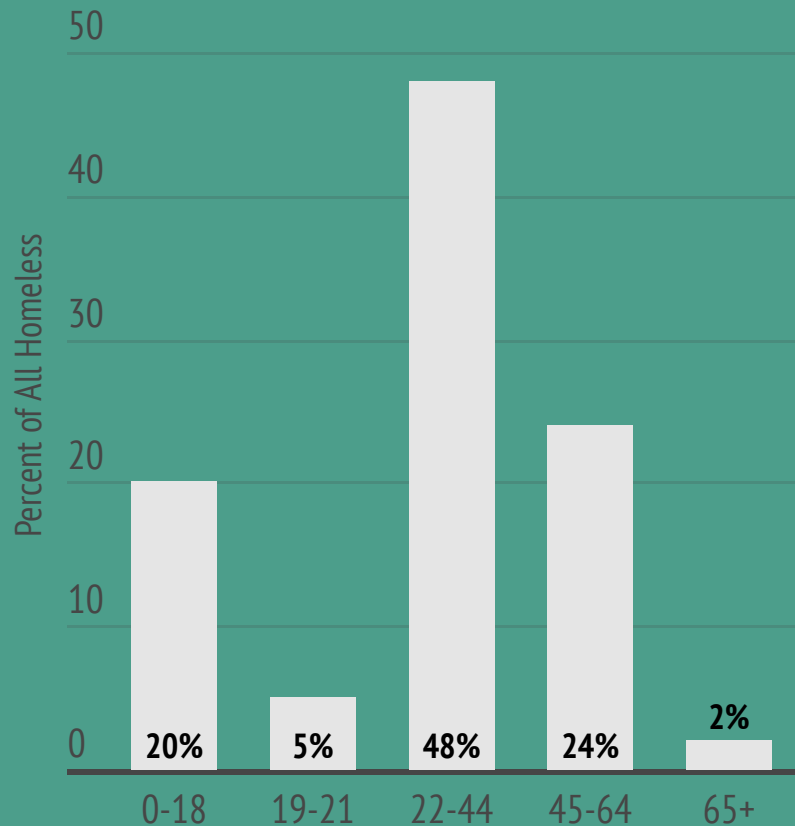




3,370

of People in Lake Co. Experiencing Homelessness Who Sought Medical Care (Larger than the Population of Kelseyville)

By Age:



An hour later, with some satisfaction, she shows us her success, the spray-painted “N” is washed away, and Hope is restored.

She explained that she was homeless, living in her car, frustrated and felt hopeless, which led her to deface the signs. When we told her about the purpose of the Hope Center, she looked up, her eyes brimming with tears, and asked if she could come back and pull weeds she’d seen on the property.

Clearly, she needed that moment of moving from “Nope” to “Hope,” But we also realized we all needed it just as much as she did.

A few days later we noticed our property was completely weed free. She had done what she promised. Now it was up to us to keep our commitment to helping, sheltering and taking care of our neighbors – to restoring a sense of hope in a community battered by fires, floods, unemployment and now COVID-19.

That’s what a community working together – health professionals, homeless advocates, businesses, government officials, faith communities and concerned citizens – can do when they use their collective power to transform a community, its health and individual lives.



It was me. I painted over your signs. I want to make it right.



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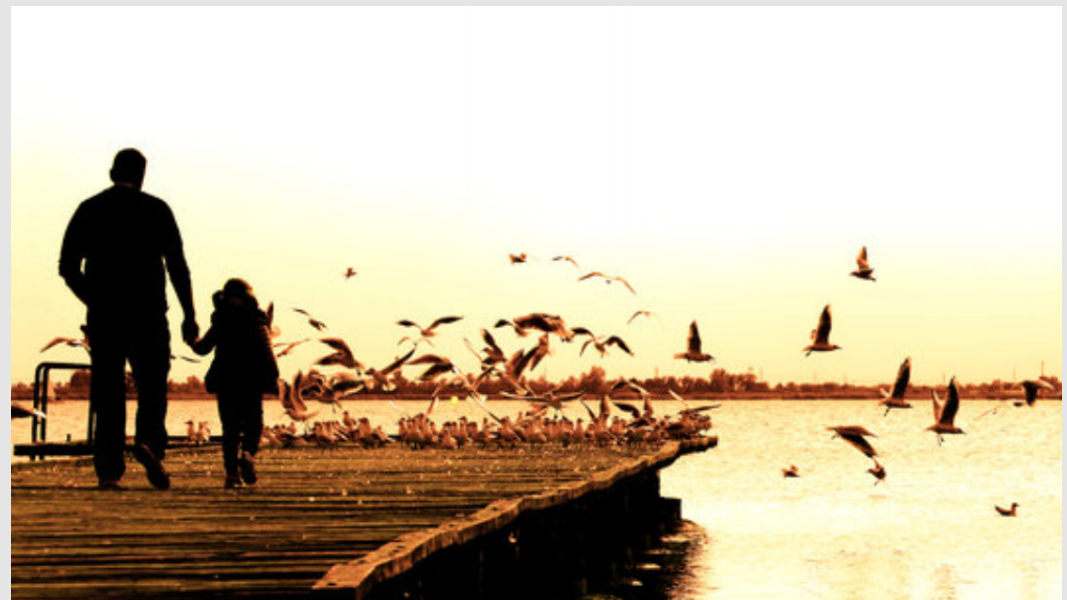
Out of the Wild and Back to Humanity

When we met one of our first clients, we learned that he, like many people experiencing homelessness, didn't have identification. An easy fix, or so we thought, but that opened the door to a whole new understanding of what our clients face while living on the streets.

Despite our persistent efforts to get him an ID, Mark resisted. We couldn't understand it. Finally, after two months of working with him, he relented and, when he presented his ID to us, he said: "Look, I'm a real person!" We chuckled, not quite understanding how meaningful this was. He then opened up and shared another piece of his story.

"I raised my daughter in Clearlake. I took her swimming at Blue Lakes. I went to parent teacher meetings. I was a dad. Dads are people. When you're living on the streets, you aren't a person.

How could a person deal with street life? You are in *beast mode*," he told us. "Eventually, you just stop seeing yourself as a person."

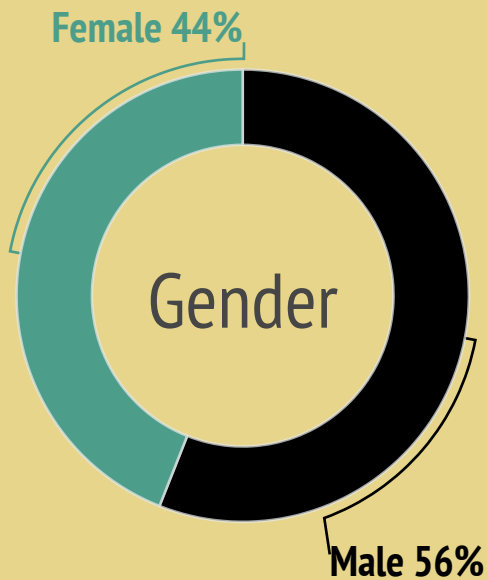
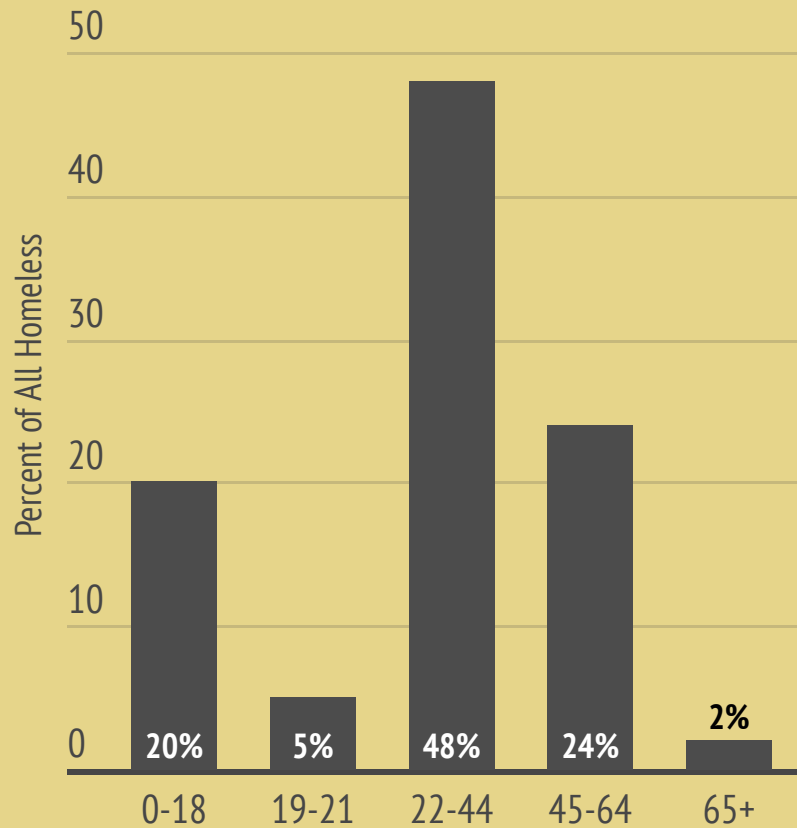




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Source: Partnership Health Plan of California, 2020

The idea of getting an ID was unbearable to him. “You don’t give an animal an ID,” he told us.

Working with Mark, we were able to get him off the streets and the long-term health care he desperately needed. Eventually, we were able to reconnect him with his daughter. She sent him a picture of the grandchildren he’d never met. That human touch, the ability to rekindle a life, opened the door for him to leave behind the animal he felt he had been on the streets and re-enter the world as a human being and as a dad.

It hasn’t been easy for Mark, and like many people suffering from addiction, he’s slipped a couple of times. But that ID is a reminder to him that he matters. He is a person that counts. It’s a powerful reminder to all of us working together – health professionals, homeless advocates, businesses, government officials, faith communities and concerned citizens – that we can use our collective power to transform communities, health and individual lives.

”

I was a dad. Dads are people. When you’re living on the street you aren’t a person.