



Press Times

HYPER LOCAL

GoPressTimes.com Daily online, weekly in print

Green Bay's #1 locally owned and operated newspaper

American Antiques & Jewelry
 2545 W. Mason St. Green Bay, WI 54303 (920) 498-0111
 Shop Online! AAandJ.com

Always buying jewelry & coins

GOLD PRICES ON THE RISE

CASH FOR GOLD

January 21, 2022 - Volume LII - No. 3 | \$2.00
Established in 1970

GREEN BAY | DE PERE | ASHWAUBENON | HOWARD | SUAMICO | ALLOUEZ | BELLEVUE | HOBART | SEYMOUR



Disregarded Homeless in Green Bay

Paul VanHandel, of Newcap, gives a few hand warmers to an unsheltered homeless individual in St. John's Park Monday, Jan. 17. Temperatures dropped into the mid-teens overnight, with wind chills in the single digits. Josh Staloch Photo

Street outreach: Bridging the gap

The harsh reality of homelessness in Green Bay

"All you can do is go back and have that conversation again, and keep trying."

BY HEATHER GRAVES EDITOR

After spending much of the evening in the emergency room

addressing possible frostbite on several of his toes, a homeless individual in his late 50s spent the night, Jan. 16, tightly wrapped in a sleeping bag on the concrete floor under the St. John's Park pavilion in downtown Green Bay.

Next to nothing separated him from the elements.

Temperatures overnight - Sunday, Jan. 16, into Monday, Jan. 17 - dropped into the mid-teens, with wind chills dipping into the single digits.

Newcap's Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) was able to get this individual off the streets and into a

motel for a couple of days. However, it's only a temporary solution.

The harsh reality is while many sleep comfortably in their heated

homes, dozens of individuals sleep on the streets or in cars in the dead of Wisconsin winters.

It's the people behind the scenes - the boots on

the ground - that continue to tackle these issues head-on, which is quite honestly, no small feat.

See HOMELESS page 12

Two birds, one stone

Green Bay City Pages becomes Press Times' arts and entertainment piece

BY PRESS TIMES STAFF

BROWN COUNTY - The Press Times sister publication, Green Bay City Pages, which launched in September 2021, has prominently been Greater Green Bay's only weekly arts and entertainment publication.

Since the beginning, it's been distributed and available free of charge each Thursday at

more than 270 locations throughout the Greater Green Bay area - including Festival Foods, Kwik Trip, the Brown County Libraries, coffee shops, bars, restaurants and other local businesses.

Moving forward, its reach will extend to Press Times subscribers, who will now receive Green Bay City Pages as an insert

in their weekly-mailed edition.

Green Bay City Pages aims to provide Press Times subscribers with increased access to Greater Green Bay art, culture and entertainment coverage.

The arts and entertainment publication will still be available for free at its current 270 locations throughout the area.

Assisted Living By Hillcrest
The Most Attentive Care

Specializing in Alzheimer's & Dementia Care, as well as Assisted Living

- Full-time licensed nurses on-site
- Medication administration, including diabetic assistance
- Health monitoring & assistance with daily cares
- Home cooked meals & life enriching activities
- Furnished apartments with housekeeping & laundry services
- Assisted Living & all-secured Memory Care

Contact Holly (920) 660-0835 for more information www.assistedlivingbyhillcrest.com

Allouez Parkside Village #1 & #2 • Brillion West Haven • Lakewood Assisted Living
Caraton Commons De Pere & Green Bay

HOMELESS
from page 1

Behind street outreach

Those who work with the homeless population say a single moment – a conversation, a hot meal, a ride, a blanket – can spark change in someone's life.

"Homeless outreach does trust and rapport, encourage, motivate and mentor," Paul VanHandel, HOT member, and former Green Bay Police officer, said. "We are supposed to be that bridge between what's happening on the street and the continuum of care in the community, to get them linked up with a provider eventually, when they're ready."

Armed with a binder of names, a backpack of supplies and years of knowledge, VanHandel meets homeless individuals where they are at, doing whatever he can to help bridge that gap between unsheltered and sheltered.

Sometimes he connects individuals with services.

Sometimes he helps find them shelter.

Sometimes he distributes hand warmers or bottles of water.

And sometimes he simply listens.

"There's nothing worse than going out and talking to somebody that has no idea what's wrong with them, and leaving them in that capacity to serve themselves and to sit there," he said. "That's wrong."

VanHandel said he began his work with the area's homeless population around 2009, when he transitioned into community policing.

"It was a bit elusive at the time," he said.

An instrumental part of getting the Basic Needs Committee and HOT team,



Paul VanHandel, left, listens to a homeless individual in St. John's Park in Green Bay in late October. **Josh Staloch Photos**

through Newcap, off the ground, VanHandel said when he retired from the police department in spring 2020, he knew his work wasn't done.

He assumed the role of HOT team member with Newcap after hanging up his badge, and continued his decade-long work.

"Because it's so needed," VanHandel said about why he continued his outreach work after retirement. "I had a conversation with Newcap prior to retiring, and we were talking about coordinating and continuing the Homeless Outreach Team/Basic Needs, really doing that on more of a countywide aspect. They asked 'Did I want to keep working on this after I retired?' And I said, 'Absolutely.' I'm part time there. It allows me to focus all my attention on this, not everything else, in the neighborhood, which, in community policing. This has allowed me to really stay focused and come up with answers."

VanHandel said he knew he couldn't walk away just yet.

"I could see the pendulum swinging," he said. "We're on a path now where we're starting to see things starting to materialize... I wanted to stay with it and continue the

work. How long will I do it? I don't know. We'll see."

VanHandel said he often gets asked why the area's homelessness problem seems to be getting worse.

"They always say statistically your problem is going to get more significant when you identify it and start working on it, right?" he said. "It's not going to get less. I mean, that's like dumb statistics. Some say 'You're putting the HOT team out there — why has the problem gotten worse?' We identified it.

We worked with it. It's just like when we were rolling out street-level drugs in the neighborhoods. The more you do, the more people are calling in reporting it."

VanHandel acknowledges some in the community were, and still are to a point, unaware of the county's homelessness struggles.

"It's more recognizable and identifiable," he said. "When we first did the full HOT team story in April 2019 when we launched it, I had somebody come up to me

“They don't know what's wrong with them, so they don't know what they need.”
- Paul VanHandel



Paul VanHandel checks on a tent in a wooded area in downtown Green Bay occupied by a pair of homeless individuals.

“I don't care if you're talking about alcohol or mental health, you can't treat it on the street. It just does not work.”
- Paul VanHandel

and go 'Are there homeless people here in Green Bay? Really? I mean, I saw your news story.' I said, 'If you see somebody with a backpack sitting in a park, or at a picnic table in a park, or just walking down the street, I'm not saying everybody, but I said many, many times, it's likely that those are people that are homeless.'"

VanHandel said outreach work was already being done before the HOT team launch, but formalizing it helped bring all parties together.

"Because street outreach, before that, was kind of like, this agency would go out here and that agency would go there, and then where does that information go?" he said. "We didn't really know what street homelessness looked like on a weekly basis. You know, what was going on on the street at any one time. How many people were there at any one time? What were their needs?"

VanHandel said he thought bringing everyone together would help streamline the process.

"I think the first thing I noticed is people telling me, 'Wow, communication has just gone really through the roof, just fantastic,'" he said. "We were all talking about the things that are really so important, so central in homelessness. Who's on the street now. It's like we're not waiting for people to just come to our agency and do an intake process, and then realize their circumstance. We have people that are living on the street and we're seeing them there. In some cases, not in every case, but our chronic people, you could really see where it was impacting (them). And then you're seeing firsthand. What are their needs? How are they living? Where are they living?"

One principal VanHandel said guides his outreach is he doesn't stop following up with individuals until he knows they have been successful at

getting off the street. In his binder, he keeps a tally of those living on the streets – their names, contacts, situation, struggles, etc. "I meet with these folks, over the course of things, you do lose track of them after a while," VanHandel said. "Their situation or life circumstances change. I can only assume, in some cases, that they're still out there somewhere, we just haven't had time to go back and rekindle every relationship because we are so busy."

He said that doesn't mean he's taking those individuals off his list.

"I'm not going to take them off this group of people — this list of mine — until I hear from somebody and they say 'Hey, we have them here, or we know they're in an apartment or we have them in our agency,' whatever they're providing, whatever that is," he said. "So, I tell people, 'If you don't like seeing my list, and you don't like seeing my numbers, then tell me where they are. Because, if you can tell me where somebody is, I'll be more than happy to take them off my list.'"



HOT member Paul VanHandel has dedicated more than 10 years of his life advocating for the homeless population.

VanHandel said the HOT team was the first attempt of boots on the ground – addressing the problem at its source.

"Some of what makes this difficult is the fact that you have such complex needs out there that you're not going to adequately track everybody, because you don't have the time to do it," he said. "The complexity of cases takes hours, because there's such significant mental health barriers, and trying to get through, to figure out what's going on (takes time)."

VanHandel said the team has come a long way, but "we're still chasing our tail a little bit."

"We, I think, have not transitioned rapidly enough to deal with these complex

See HOMELESS page 13



DELIVERY DRIVERS WANTED



CITY pages every Thursday

is Green Bay's free weekly arts and entertainment publication delivered to 250 locations throughout Greater Green Bay. We are looking for a dependable driver to help start delivering on Thursday mornings.

MUST HAVE YOUR OWN TRANSPORTATION

Contact Us at 1-920-799-4687

120150

SUDOKU

GRAND ALASKAN CRUISE & TOUR
12 days, departs May - Sep 2022
1-855-208-9533 promo code N7017
FROM \$1,949 \$1,699
FREE ONBOARD CREDIT

5					8	3	
		3		7	9		
						5	9
		6		3		5	9
		2				4	
7	9	4		2		6	
4	1						
			7	4		1	
	3	5					4

© StatePoint Media
Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

6	3	5	1	8	2	9	7	4
9	2	8	7	4	3	1	6	5
4	1	7	9	5	6	8	3	2
7	6	4	8	2	5	9	1	3
3	5	2	6	9	1	4	8	7
1	8	6	4	3	7	5	9	2
2	4	1	8	9	3	6	7	5
8	6	3	5	7	2	6	4	1
5	7	2	1	4	8	3	6	9

60-60-60 SALE

60% OFF INSTALLATION OF A CABINET REFACING PROJECT!

60 MONTH FINANCING! LOW MONTHLY PAYMENTS! SENIOR & MILITARY DISCOUNTS!

60 WALMART GIFT CARD WITH IN-HOME ESTIMATE!

MAD CITY KITCHENS

CALL TODAY! 920-471-1739
www.madcitykitchens.com

1. New orders only. Minimum purchase required. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Does not include material costs. 2. Financing available with minimum purchase and approved credit. Mad City Windows & Baths, LLC is neither a broker nor a lender. Financing is provided by third party lenders, unaffiliated with Mad City Windows & Baths, LLC, under terms and conditions accepted directly between the customer and such lender, all subject to credit requirements and satisfactory completion of financial documents. Any finance terms advertised are estimates only. Ask for details. New orders only. Not valid with any other offer, or previous job. 3. Offer in-home estimate and product demonstration only. Homeowner(s) limit one per household. Electronic gift card (e-gift card) voucher given upon completion of demonstration to be mailed in by homeowner(s). Salesperson(s) do not carry a gift card(s) for security reasons. E-gift card valid on in-home visits only, not applicable to Virtual Sales Representative(s). Offer not sponsored or provided by Walmart and is subject to change without notice prior to reservation. Allow 2-3 weeks after demonstration to receive e-gift card. E-gift card valued at \$40.



Green Bay Police Lieutenant Nate Allen serves as the department's westside community officer working with the homeless population. **Josh Staloch Photo**

HOMELESS
from page 12

needs that are out there right now," he said. "It's like we're grasping to catch up, to deal with why is Person A still homeless? Three months ago we started with Person A. Why is Person A still out there struggling?"

VanHandel said much of it has to do with a lack of adequate services for complex needs.

"We're at the point where who's agreeing to take this person?" he said. "I mean, I've been saying this for years, this goes all the way back. I don't care if you're talking about alcohol or mental health, you can't treat it on the street. It just does not work. Our outpatient treatment for mental health is not adequate to deal with unsheltered homeless people that have an off-again, on-again phone number that might be in a given park one day. And next week, they may be in a different location, or they might be in safe summer sleep at St. John's for a while, and then gets offered an apartment to stay in over a weekend with somebody, and then go back to unsheltered homelessness?"

VanHandel said some individuals on the street are also not capable of functioning on an everyday basis.

"They don't know what's wrong with them, so they don't know what they need," he said.

VanHandel said Brown County's HOT team is modeled after similar efforts in

Sarasota, Florida, San Diego and Milwaukee.

Part of what the team learned, he said, was first creating a plan to look at what "barriers exist, and then also be that conduit between the continuum of care in the community and what people were experiencing on the street."

"Some question 'Why aren't you getting them into shelter? Why aren't you finding them a place?'" he said. "But what is that provider care? What does that look like? Is it available when they need it to be available? Can it deal with complex mental health needs? Many of them can't - they don't have mental health providers. So it's like, how do you service that? How do you deal with that?"

VanHandel said it's those questions, along with many others, that keep the HOT team going.

"We meet monthly via Zoom," he said. "We just have to be able to have more providers and more answers for mental health. Otherwise, we're not really solving our problems. And that's what I tell people in the community, that it is so driven by this mental health aspect, and if we're not talking about that, we're not talking about the same thing."

Transitioning model

With the St. John's last resort shelter open for the season, VanHandel said the outreach model changes slightly.

"We transition to being less involved on the street and

more involved in the shelter model, because we look at people and go, 'You spent a significant amount of time on the street last year,'" he said. "What's going to be different? What are we going to do to make a difference next year? If we don't do something to impact that, you know as well as I do, we will see this again next year, and it will be this way, or worse. And to let that happen is just not the right thing, and I think everybody agrees with that."

However, VanHandel said his work on the streets doesn't end - noting on any given night 20-25 people are still sleeping on the streets, in parks or in cars.

"Certainly, we're still going to have people on the street," he said.

Continued police outreach

Green Bay Police Lieutenant Nate Allen took the reins

I forced one alderperson to come out with me. The mayor (Eric Genrich) is the only guy who took me up on it to come out for the day and see what this homeless population is like. The one person who nearly jumped out of the screen, raising his hand right away, was the mayor. (He said), 'Yeah, I want to go.' Everyone else - it was crickets. I don't understand how you solve a problem in a meeting when you don't want to go out and see it firsthand, wrap your head around it. We need a lot more of x, y and z, and less of a, b and c."

Allen said he sometimes questions the lack of outreach support from surrounding communities.

"Where is Ashwaubenton? Where is De Pere?" he said. "Where are all these other communities in Brown County? Why is it just Green Bay's problem? It's not just the city's problem, it's a coun-

tered view of reality."

Allen said the more he interacts with the unsheltered homeless population, the more he learns about them and the struggles that have contributed to why they find themselves homeless.

He said sometimes all it takes is listening.

"Nine times out of 10, that is all it is," he said. "I just deal with unsheltered people. That is all I know. I know there are people who are in hotels, or cars, or shelters, but I don't see those people on a regular basis. Most of those people are halfway there. And a lot of those people don't have AODA (alcohol and other drug abuse) or mental health issues. A lot of those individuals just fell on hard times. Out here, the unsheltered, that is where you have a lot of your AODA and mental health issues. That is the population I know."

“Oconto, people get out of jail up there and they will bring them down here and drop them off at the corner of Washington and Walnut and say 'St. John's is over there.' The sheriff's department does that. We've had Shawano County bring people over. We've had other jurisdictions bring people up. Some jurisdictions put people on buses and send them up here.”

- Lieutenant Nate Allen

as the department's westside community police officer when VanHandel retired in April 2020.

"I only really deal with the unsheltered population," Allen said.

Working as a patrol officer prior to assuming his community policing role, Allen said he knew there was a homeless population in Green Bay, but he didn't directly interact with them often.

He said this unintentional ignorance is part of what further contributes to the ongoing struggles.

Allen said what's frustrating is there are only a handful of people on the street level addressing the issue.

"These people want to solve this problem in a Zoom meeting," he said. "I've gotten on people in these meetings - and I've gotten one taker, and

ty problem."

Allen said most of the officers within the police department have Community Crisis Intervention Team training in regards to mental health in general.

"When I talk with people out here, yeah, I run across mental health issues - it is definitely a black-and-white thing," he said.

Allen said during some instances, he reaches out to the two mental health officers or the Brown County clinician who works with the department to help evaluate individuals.

"They will come out, they are very good at coming out, and we'll talk and form relationships there," he said. "More often than not, (individuals with mental health issues) aren't a threat to themselves or others, they just have this al-

Contributing to the struggles

Allen said another issue Green Bay is dealing with is some outside the Brown County community take advantage of the resources available in the city.

"Oconto, people get out of jail up there and they will bring them down here and drop them off at the corner of Washington and Walnut and say 'St. John's is over there,'" he said. "The sheriff's department has done that. We've had Shawano County bring people over. We've had other jurisdictions bring people up. Some jurisdictions put people on buses and send people up here."

Allen said it has partially to do with the size of the Green Bay/Brown County area, and the increased resource offerings available.

He said these tactics only exacerbate the problem - put-

NEXT WEEK:

Disregarded: Life in a shelter shares the stories of sheltered individuals in Brown County - from single adults and families to unaccompanied minors, this piece dives into the struggles and triumphs of shelter life.

DISREGARDED: THE VIDEO

In partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, the educational partner of the NEW News Lab, The Press Times compiled a supporting short video to accompany the series' written pieces. Visit gopresstimes.com to view this impactful piece.

POINT IN TIME COUNT

Newcap is looking for volunteers to take part in the first of two yearly Point In Time Counts from 11:45 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 26, to 4 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 27.

During this street count, teams of volunteers go to designated areas throughout Brown County during the overnight hours and look for individuals who are homeless, living on the street or in vehicles.

Volunteers can sign up for multiple shifts.

To help out, contact Aria Ard at ariaard@newcap.org.

ting even more stress on an already stressed situation.

"What do you do though?" Allen said. "You can't just call Oconto County, or Shawano County, and say 'Hey, come pick your guy up'... You know, these other jurisdictions funnel people here, just stop. There is nothing we can do."

NOW HIRING

WorkForWorthington.com



MAKERS OF BETTER



MINIMUM PAY

\$20

AN HOUR

PLUS QUARTERLY INCENTIVE PLAN

SIGN-ON BONUS

\$2,000

PRODUCTION

\$4,000

MAINTENANCE

ON-SITE INTERVIEWS

SCAN QR CODE TO APPLY