



Project Homeless Connect Provides Resources to Madison County Community

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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ALTON - The annual Madison County Project Homeless Connect event had a successful turnout for 2023 at The River of Life Family Church in Alton. Several organizations gathered under one roof to provide resources and networking opportunities to locals in need.

David Kerr, homeless services director for Madison County, said they were able to provide a wide range of goods and services from a variety of organizations, making the event a “one-stop-shop.”

“What we’re trying to do is get those who are experiencing homelessness connected to the various services that are offered throughout the county,” Kerr said. “There’s been medical checkups, vaccines, flu shots, we’ve just got a lot of things going on - a lot of different organizations, a lot of different government entities represented.

“One of the struggles is that people just don’t know what’s available. We’ve got food pantries here, we’ve got government entities, we’ve got Madison County Transit - we’ve just got a lot of things going on all in one place, so people not only can get things today, but they can find out what’s being offered throughout the county every day of the year.”

Elizabeth Bockstruck with Oasis Women’s Shelter provided men’s, women’s, and children’s items, homemade quilts, afghans, scarves, hats, and more to not only assist the homeless population, but also domestic violence victims. She said statistically, 60% of homeless women are victims of domestic violence.

“It’s very important that we’re doing outreach and trying to get them into the services, and they have the need for both safety as well as personal care,” she said. “To me, this is crucial because there sources out there and they have to know where the resources are - it’s our chance to help them.”

Janelle Smart, shelter program director for the Alton Salvation Army, provided information on the organization’s continuing and upcoming programs. They host “Pantry Days” on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, where there are “opportunities for the community to come and receive goods,” and they also have an After School Program, which she said started last year and is “going great.”

Kerr said one of Project Homeless Connect’s purposes is to allow the organizations there to network with each other, and also spread the word about everything they have to offer.

“This is a great day for those of us who are trying to offer services to get together,” he said. “There’s just so much that goes on 365 days a year that I think people don’t know about, and this is a good way to get the word out.”

He added that opportunities for rent assistance, energy bill assistance, and more are available through The Madison County Referral Line at (618) 296-5300.