

For Immediate Release
Janie Yett - 831-429-6353 janeyett@igc.org
Brent Adams- 831-234-9848 compassionman@hotmail.com

GROUP OF CONCERNED CITIZENS CALLS FOR WARMING CENTERS TO SHELTER THE HOMELESS ON THE COLDEST NIGHTS.

A group of concerned citizens calling themselves "The Warming Group" are calling on the Homeless Services Center, the City and County of Santa Cruz, churches, and other groups with large indoor spaces or other resources to come together to continue a conversation about how to create, maintain, and publicize warming centers where homeless people can get out of the elements when temperatures plummet to deadly lows, or when the weather is otherwise extreme. In their meetings, they intend to bring in representatives of appropriate spaces as well those from local government and non-profits.

The next two meetings are January 14 at 7 pm at 535 Spring Street and one week later, January 21, at 7pm at Louden Nelson Center Rm #1 301 Center St. Santa Cruz.

They plan to have regular meetings to develop the vision. For more details visit the Facebook page at facebook.com/warmingcenter. Anyone with an idea to help further the vision of creating warming centers is welcome.

Our most severe cold snap this past December brought sad news of several homeless individuals in San Jose freezing to death. Many in Santa Cruz wondered if some of our homeless would die from lack of shelter on our coldest nights.

A recent study by Applied Survey Research found that among the more than 3,500 homeless individuals in Santa Cruz County, 82% of homeless residents in Santa Cruz County, and 69% in the City of Santa Cruz remain unsheltered. On nights when the temperature plummets to extreme lows, such a lack of shelter can be deadly.

December's harshest cold spell galvanized numerous blanket and coat drives, and the Homeless Services Center and various churches opened all their available spaces to take in as many people as possible. However, The Warming Group remains concerned that Santa Cruz City and County lack sufficient (and sufficiently well-known and accessed) warm spaces available to shelter the homeless, especially on nights when the emergency shelter at the Armory is unavailable due to the National Guard schedule.

The Warming Group invites folks for their "proactive participation." Jane Yett, a member of the groups says "We need to take the initiative to help ensure greater safety from potentially life-threatening circumstances during the cold winter months. It is our hope that those with usable indoor spaces will move forward as quickly as possible to provide ad-hoc warming centers that can be put in place before the next cold spell. Longer term, we see the need for a more comprehensively organized program that can be put in place to meet the needs of those who might otherwise freeze to death."

A warming center is simply a space operated with the mission of preventing loss of life due to the elements. It is a physical location that provides heat and plumbing on the coldest nights. Yett adds, "we believe this effort draws upon a broadly-shared humanitarian concern that unites our community."