

2017 Cowtown Stand Down



Texas District 12 Cmdr. Bill Deal distributes hygiene kits assembled by the district's American Legion Auxiliary volunteers as part of the 9th annual Cowtown Homeless Veteran Stand Down held recently in south Fort Worth.

Texas District 12 American Legion volunteers from greater Tarrant County joined forces with support groups across North Central Texas during the 9th Annual Cowtown Homeless Veteran Stand Down held recently at the Resource Connection Gym in south Fort Worth.

District 12 Cmdr. Bill Deal said the November 12 outreach effort "...was a way to let our less fortunate veterans know we care about them and thank them for their service to our great nation.

"It was such a pleasure to see the smiles on these veterans as they walked around. Our District 12 members were there in large numbers and greeted every veteran with a grin and a handshake. I know when I say we're getting ready for next year's Stand Down, I speak for the 12th District Family."

The collaboration was headed by the VA North Texas Health Care System. Co-sponsors included the Salvation Army, Veterans Coalition of Tarrant County, Tarrant Co. Food Bank, Hands of Hope and Tarrant County Public Health. Legion District 12 had several post and auxiliary volunteers contributing as well.

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Hundreds of homeless veterans were provided a broad range of necessities including food, shelter, clothing, health screenings, as well as VA and Social Security benefits counseling. Veterans also received referrals for assistance with employment, substance use treatment and mental health counseling.

The Cowntown Stand Down was a collaborative event, coordinated between local VA leaders, other government agencies and community-based homeless service providers. In Fort Worth, the outreach included HIV & Hep C testing, flu shots, haircuts and countless giveaways.

As Cmdr. Deal notes, “At this event, we distribute winter necessities and other donated items to our homeless veterans in Fort Worth and the surrounding area. Our intent was to help meet their needs and support the Legion’s mission of ending homelessness.”

The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans estimates that on any given night, more than 200,000 veterans are homeless. One in three of these homeless people end up sleeping in a doorway, alleys or a cardboard box. This is occurring in cities nationwide and in rural areas as well. And these are veterans who bravely served their country when called.

So, why call such an effort a stand down? In times of war, exhausted combat units needing time to rest and recover, are brought from the battlefields to a place of relative security and safety. A homeless veterans’ stand down refers to a grassroots, community-based intervention designed to help Fort Worth homeless veterans combat life on the street.

“It is a hand up, not a handout philosophy,” Cmdr. Deal explains. “But such an event couldn’t happen without the hard work of hundreds of volunteers and organizations throughout the city.”

Stand downs are conducted across the nation. They bring agencies and communities together to address the needs of the homeless. In turn, they educate and inform homeless veterans of locally available services. The event links people with on-site services. It encourages a continuum of care through teamwork between agencies.

“A stand down is a moment where the community can to connect with homeless vets,” Deal concludes, “and address a crisis that affects every city and state in this country.”

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