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Number of homeless people on streets of Springfield drops for 5th year in a row, annual count reveals

By PETER GOONAN

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SPRINGFIELD - The number of homeless people found on the streets of Springfield declined for the fifth year in a row in January, with 12 individuals found as compared to 20 last year.

The number has steadily declined since the first annual count in January 2004, when 98 homeless individuals were found on the streets during an evening count. The counts occur nationwide on the last week of January.

There was, however, a significant increase in the number of families found in shelters during the count, rising from 67 families last year to 107 families this year. There were no families found on the streets in the January count.

The statistics, from an evening count conducted on Jan. 28, showed overall progress even while the region is gripped in a recession and a rise in foreclosures and unemployment, city officials said.

The statistics were released during a press conference Thursday attended by Springfield officials, homeless advocates, and Philip F. Mangano, the executive director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, who is President Obama's point person on homeless initiatives.

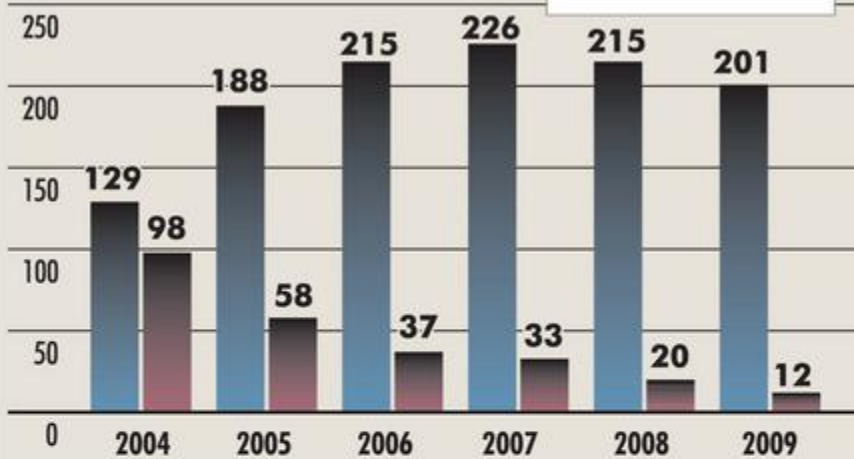


Photo by Mark M. Murray, The Republican Springfield

Mayor Domenic J. Sarno, left, looks on Thursday as Mary Walachy, executive director of the Davis Foundation, and Peter Straley, right, president of Health New England, were introduced at a City Hall press conference as the new co-chairmen of Springfield's Homes Within Reach Committee.

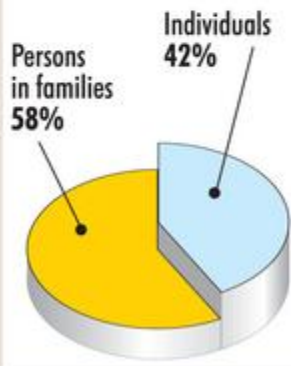
Homeless individuals

Point-in-time count, Springfield



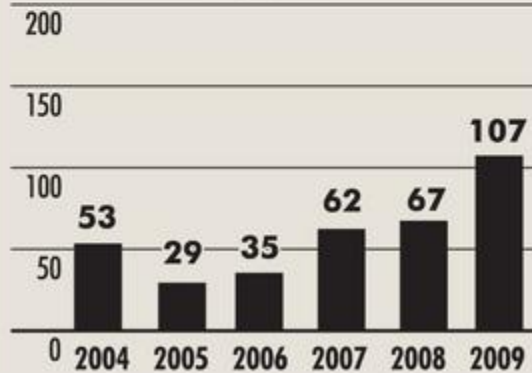
Homeless persons

Springfield, Jan. 28, 2009



Homeless families

Point-in-time count, Springfield



Staff chart

Mangano said Springfield continues to serve as a national model on strategies to reduce homelessness, that focuses on providing housing and services, known as "Housing First."

"You should be so proud," Mangano said, calling the city "in the forefront of cities its size" nationwide.

The city began a "Homes Within Reach" initiative in January 2007, which is a public-private partnership that seeks to reduce homelessness by assisting people to obtain housing and employment as soon as possible.

Springfield Mayor Domenic J. Sarno named two new co-chairmen of the Homes Within Reach Committee: Mary Walachy, executive director of the Davis Foundation, and Peter Straley, president and chief executive officer of Health New England.

Robert Schwarz, executive vice-president of Peter Pan Bus Lines, officially stepped down as chairman, but will remain a committee member.