

## How to Help the Homeless This Winter

Colder temperatures and wet weather make living on the streets tougher than ever. Here's how to help the homeless in Central Contra Costa County by donating coats and cash, or volunteering.

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Homeless men, women and families face additional struggles this time of year with the cold, wet conditions. Here's how to help in Central Contra Costa County by donating coats and cash, or volunteering.

The season of giving also happens to be the harshest season of all for the homeless, who face sickness and even death in cold temperatures and damp conditions.

A number of winter shelters are open in Contra Costa County, however, spaces are limited and many homeless men and women choose not to go if they have to give up their pets, alcohol and drug habits, or enter into a program, according to Doug Stewart of Central County Homeless Outreach.

If you would like to help the homeless in your community, below are a few options for donating time, clothes and bedding, or money to support homeless outreach programs and shelters in Central Contra Costa County.

## Where to Volunteer to Help the Homeless

- The **winter shelter run by the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County** needs volunteers for tutoring and group activities, overnight shifts and janitorial work. For more information, visit [CCCWinterNights.org](http://CCCWinterNights.org) or [download an application form here](#).

- Food banks provide groceries for the homeless as well as families in need of assistance. The **First Christian Church of Concord** is looking for volunteers to assemble food bags and sort through items, as is the **Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, based in Concord**, which needs volunteers all year round.
- **SHELTER Inc. in Martinez** is looking for people to help sort through the donations intended for homeless families.
- **Urban Farmers of Lafayette** needs help picking fresh fruit and vegetables for donation to the homeless and hungry.
- Foster homes are needed for the pets of homeless men and women through the **Homeless Animals' Lifeline Organization, based in Antioch**.
- The **Change 4 Real Change program in Concord** is looking for volunteers to help with marketing, community events and more.
- **Walnut Creek's United Methodist Church** has a program that helps families move out of homelessness and into homes.

More volunteer opportunities can be found through [the Volunteer Center of the East Bay](#). Visit the website at [VolunteerEastBay.org](http://VolunteerEastBay.org), enter your zip code and find local organizations in need of volunteers.

## Where to Donate Coats and Winter Clothes for the Homeless

- **Businesses in Lafayette** are taking donations of warm clothing and blankets, including hats, sweaters, coats, gloves and socks. [Click here to find out where to donate your winter clothes for the homeless.](#)
- Donate a winter coat to the homeless through **One Warm Coat Drive**. [Enter your zipcode on OneWarmCoat.org](#) to find local donation centers.

## Where to Donate Cash for the Homeless

- Most organizations dedicated to helping the homeless will accept, and appreciate, financial donations. In some cases, such as with the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, donating cash can be more beneficial than goods because of the organization's ability to buy at wholesale prices.
- Some cities, including Concord and Martinez, are encouraging residents not to give money to panhandlers but to donate it to local organizations such as **Central County Homeless Outreach**, which provides the only by-night homeless outreach in the county.
- **Change 4 Real Change, based in Concord** has enlisted local businesses to accept donations to local homeless shelters and programs.