



# Lookout Emergency Aid Society

## Emergency Shelter Programs 2008-2009

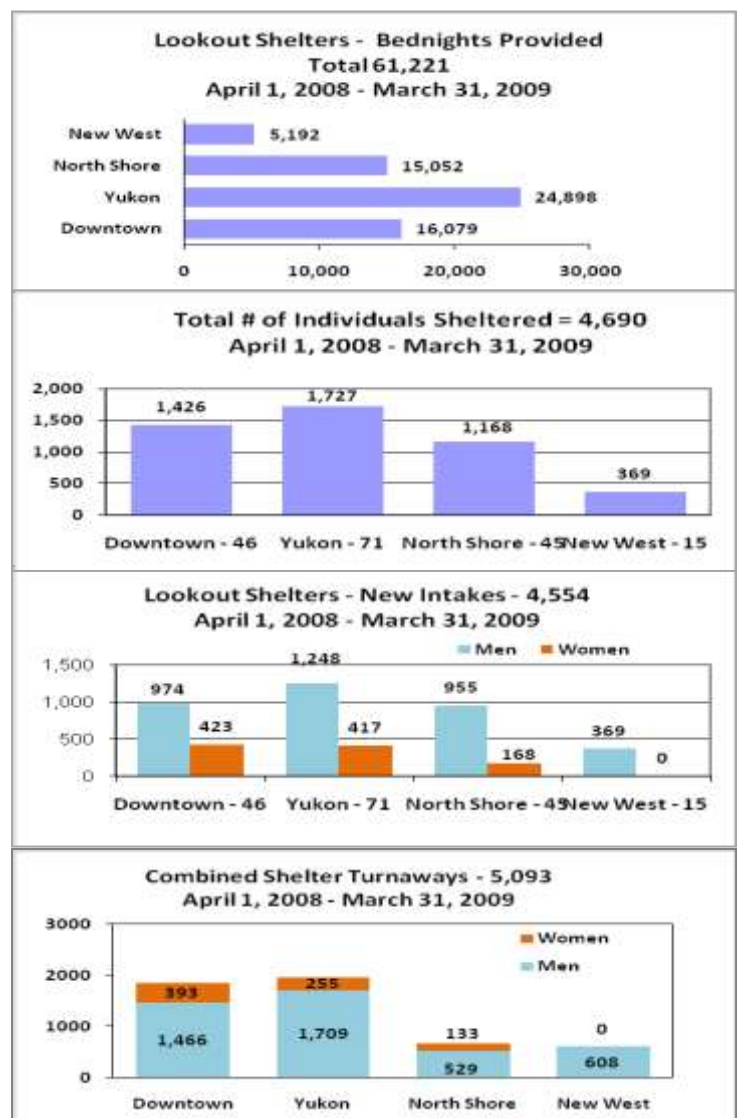
Lookout's emergency shelters continue to be in high demand especially for the 24-hour, minimal barrier services that we offer to those who cannot be housed elsewhere. This has again been demonstrated by the 2008 Homeless Count. Our four shelters are located in three municipalities (City of North Vancouver, New Westminster and Vancouver), and provide minimal barrier temporary accommodation (181 beds) with support to adult men and women who are destitute and have no housing alternatives. In addition to the emergency shelters, Lookout expands services during risky winter weather to offer a 30-bed no barrier extreme weather shelter in Burnaby as well as an additional 20 sheltering spaces at the North Shore Shelter.

In addition to shelter, residents are provided three meals plus snacks per day, laundry, access to clothing, showers, hygiene supplies and a free phone and computer. A minimum of two staff are on duty at all times to meet the health and safety needs of all within our buildings. Non judgmental, caring staff work with each individual, giving support and addressing issues of housing, finances, treatment (e.g. mental, physical, addiction), etc., through crisis counselling, case planning and referral/liaison services. Lookout's intent is to provide shelter in the individual's home community, integrating with local services and to help people regain stability in their lives.

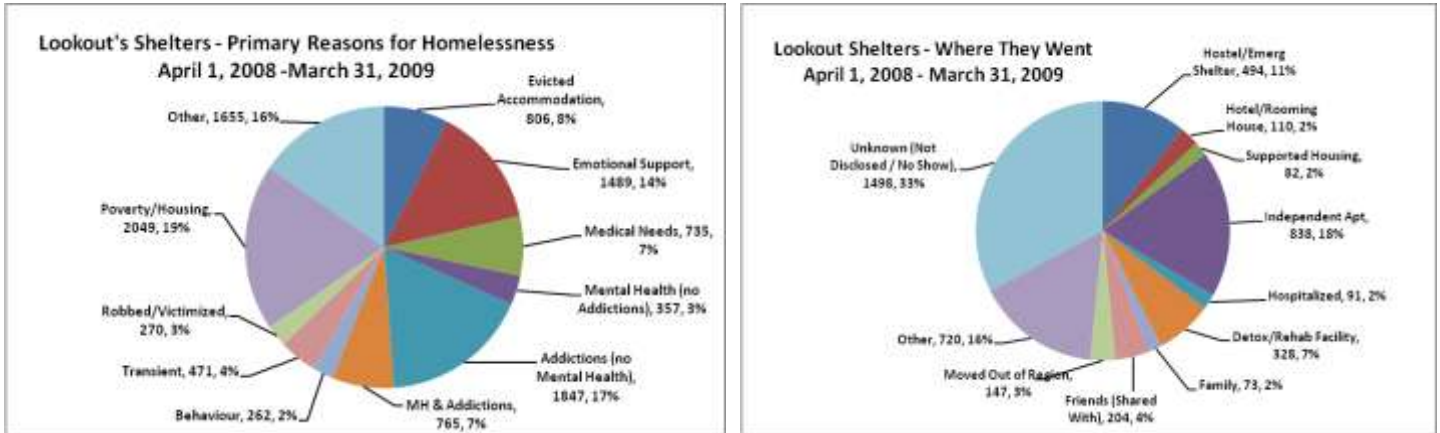
Lookout is better able to meet the needs of the absolute homeless with the addition of the 15-bed New Westminister Shelter in April 2008. We provided **61,221** bednights of shelter and service, up **10%** from our prior year. We ran an overall **2%** vacancy rate, less than the **3%** that we had last year which leaves even less with which to respond on an emergency basis.

Vacancies were caused by the lack of appropriate beds (e.g. gender, etc.). **4,554** new people stayed in our shelters (**3,546 -78% men/1008 - 22% women**). Including carry-overs from the prior year, we served **4,690** individuals, down **7%** from last year because our length of stays increased **24%** (from **11** days last year to **13.6** days this year).

Our turnaways remain at an unacceptable level with **5,093** being turned away, **3%** increase over the previous year (**4,956**) reflecting that for every person we shelter, we turned away another. Still this is significantly lower than the all-time high of **6,079** turnaways in 2004/05. With the introduction of the 4 HEAT shelters in the City of Vancouver, our turnaway numbers took a dramatic dive, but still, turning away an average of just under two hundred people per month is unacceptable. This continues to demonstrate the ongoing need for more permanent shelter beds, especially ones with supportive services (not located in the temporary HEAT shelters.) However, the success of the HEAT shelters does reflect the necessity for minimal-barrier shelters.



The profiles of our shelter users reflect the continuing need for minimal-barrier, accessible housing and services designed and staffed to successfully house individuals coping with a variety of challenges. The health risk to shelterless people is immense: they have lower immune systems, poor diets, high frequency of contracting infectious diseases and respiratory ailments and high risks of alcohol and drug abuse. Sadly, the long term effect of homelessness is a reduced life expectancy and a heavy user of health delivery services. The result is not only devastating to the individual, but the cost on the health care system is significant.



The following reports are submitted by the four different shelter sites.

## Downtown Shelter

This building offers 46 shelter spaces in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver.

Year end reporting is a useful way to review the past year, and helps us in planning to address our needs and issues in the coming year. **This year we served 1,476 individuals, including 1,397 new referrals.** This is approx **7%** decrease from last year. We turned away **1,859** people (last year **1,871**) including **393** women.

We have been concerned about the low numbers of people who self refer or walk in from the street accessing the shelter beds. This is because we hold beds for those referred by phone until later in the evening. It means that people who walk in generally do not gain access to the beds, despite our 'first come' policy. It is important to remember that a referral client is already receiving some support, even if minimal, whereas those totally on their own have no benefit of assistance or advocacy to help obtain shelter or housing. This year **51%** of the people we served were self referred, meaning that we have been successful at increasingly accessibility for those walking in. This is a trend seen over the past 4 years (34% to 37% to 40% to 51%) and represents the dedication and hard work of shelter staff to meet the needs of our clients. The Downtown Shelter had an additional Case Worker, thanks to increased funding from BC Housing, which permitted us to address this concern better. I have gratitude and praise for our workers who make such success through their everyday efforts.

This year people living on the street came into more public view, with 'camps' set up in Oppenheimer Park and at times occupying much of the sidewalk on the 300 block Alexander. Our Outreach teams were very active in assisting people - but as people were persuaded to come into the shelter and begin steps toward securing permanent accommodation, new folks would refill sleeping spots on the sidewalks. We did our best to aid and refer, and though we helped many come inside, the visibility and concentration of the homeless remained an issue.

This past winter we welcomed the opening of the HEAT shelters in December, increasing the overall capacity for basic shelter for the homeless. We have been participating by providing overnight staff enhancement at First United Church, the first of these shelters to open. While the City and Province receive pressure to take stronger action on homelessness, the opening and continuance of the HEAT shelters is a major undertaking that truly benefitted the people on the street this past



winter. While many people were turned away (**1,859**) this is only 12 less than last year. The HEAT shelters decreased the turnaways but did not eliminate. We still turned away approx 100 per month. The good news is that we have never had a winter where we had so many options to get turnaways into shelter somewhere.

The primary reasons for homelessness stayed similar over the past number of years, with individuals with addictions, addictions and mental illness (concurrent disorders) or people with medical needs being most frequently housed in our shelter. This continues to reflect the complex needs of the homeless, and demonstrates how truly vulnerable they are.

*I speak from experience.  
The care and the staff  
kindness they give here,  
actually saves lives.*

**Brenda**

We served fewer people who have 'no income', a **3%** drop (**115 vs. 157** last year, this is partly because we see more 'working poor' who are homeless. It also may reflect the increased role of outreach in the community. Outreach has succeeded in helping people receive assistance or disability funds, even if there is no place to house them.

The effectiveness of the retention of SRO's and increased staffing is demonstrated by **30%** of the shelter residents moving into independent, unsupported housing, including SRO's. A further **623** individuals (42% of all who leave) kept their destination anonymous, but given that only 36% return to our shelter within a two year period, we believe that most find accommodations.

We acknowledge our friends at Safe-Ride who transported people to and from our shelter – their assistance is invaluable. Lookout also acknowledges the current government for having undertaken a solid foundation for solving homelessness and urges them to stay the course despite the current economic climate. Housing takes time and money to create. But as more resources become available, our work at the Downtown Shelter begins to be more successful at ending the cycle between poor and undesirable housing, the streets and the shelters. As housing is revitalized or created, we are able to direct people towards hope. Even if it is on a wait list basis, people can be given viable options at a point when they really need a chance to aim for something better. We certainly hope for continuance of the work to preserve or expand low-cost and supported housing, as it continues to be far more common for people to be placed onto waitlists rather than into housing.

## Yukon Emergency Shelter

*Located on Yukon at 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Vancouver, the Yukon Shelter offers 71 shelter beds, including 26 in a dorm, previously used for the seasonal Cold Wet Weather beds.*

This past year has shown a decrease in the overall number of clients (**1,727** people) served yet provided an insignificant decrease of bednights (**0.5%**). We offered **24,898** bednights to **15%** fewer people than last year. Of the **1,727** served, **1,665** were new admissions, of which **1,248 (75%)** were men and **417 (25%)** were women. The average length of stay was **14.4** days, up **13%** from the average of **12.7** days last year. There is a significant change in the length of stays – stays of 7 or less days decreased to **44%** from **51%** while the length of stays over a month increased to **11%** from last year's **8%**. We believe the increase in seniors and persons with pets have longer stays due to the lack of suitable affordable housing. Pets are important family members, and therefore getting 'rid' of the pet is not in the client's best interest. Of all intakes, **125 (8%)** slept on the street the night before. Another **101 (6%)** transferred from a different shelter. **36%** came from their own unsupported accommodation. **831 (50%)** of all intakes indicated that addictions contributed to their inability to remain housed. Our turn-away rate remains extremely high even though overall there was an **8%** dip, from **2,140** in 2007-08 to **1,946** in 2008-09. We believe this is because of the implementation of the HEAT shelters in December. Despite this, we still turned away almost **2,000** people in one year – for everyone housed, we turned away another!

*"I was treated with respect; the shelter workers explained and discussed all aspects of my issues so that I understood."*

**Anon**

The most important service we provide at Yukon is helping clients assess their needs and do case planning. We connected **1,230** people to one or more appropriate resources in the community, including **378** with addiction services, **272** to clinical services or emergency medical treatment and **300** with psych services and assessments. A partnership with MEIA allows new emergency clients to call for an appointment the next day, and **10 to 12** every month took advantage. Vancouver Detox is another partner, they transfer people to the shelter who no longer need detox, but are waiting for treatment. Unfortunately often we did not have the bed space available when needed.

This past year BC Housing provided more money to increase our staffing levels to track people and their success in sustaining long-term housing. With the extra funding we have created an Outreach component to provide follow-up as well as assist finding housing for shelter residents. The money also funded another Case Worker.

**401 (23%)** of the shelter users moved successfully from the shelter into independent housing, including moves into DTES SROs. We are challenged in finding affordable housing outside of the Downtown Eastside given the money allotted for rent for those on low fixed incomes. **83 (5%)** went into shared accommodation or with family, **101 people (6%)** entered Detox or another recovery facility and **28 people (2%)** were hospitalized. **48** moved out of the region. A greater number, **650 (39%)**, have chosen not to disclose. We assume, through our shelter recidivism figures, that most found their own accommodation and wanted to remain anonymous about their situation.

When surveyed, **82%** of the shelter users indicated that Lookout staff was a valuable support in their lives and **97%** said that the staff empowered them in achieving their goals. This high approval rating validates our work and recognizes how effective Lookout has been in assisting shelter guests on arrival, in goal-setting and then through the review process – we have been able to help them stay motivated and focused.

Over the last year the Yukon has hosted many special guests from around the world including Miloon Kothari, the United Nations Rapporteur on Human Rights, Rooftops Canada and a delegation from South Africa, as well as representatives from various organizations all across North America. These separate groups see the Yukon as a model for design and service delivery to homeless populations.

We are very excited to be working towards the creation of new permanent housing at First and Main, and our shelter residents have provided input into building design. This follows Lookout's mandate to offer solutions to homelessness. The Yukon Housing Center will continue to provide a safe and supportive environment to those in need and the staff take great pride in the work that they do, and look forward to another successful year.

## North Shore Shelter

*The Shelter provides the North Shore adult homeless men and women with 45 beds. In addition, as part of the local Extreme Weather Response, we also offer up to 20 "overflow" mats - with further capacity as needed through a satellite site at North Shore Neighbourhood House.*

During the past year the North Shore Shelter provided **15,052** bednights of service, approx **400** less than last year. We housed **1,168** men and women (**15%**) - a **92%** overall occupancy rate that ranged from December's high of **98%** to July's low of **83%**. **313** fewer individuals used the shelter than last year (**1,481**), and the average length of stay increased to 13.2 days, up 23% from 10.2 days last year. Frustratingly, despite our beds being more available, we still turned away **662** individuals, including **133** women (**20%**) because of lack of beds or our inability to meet their specific needs. This is significantly less than last year (by **283** persons **-30%**) and may be due to the increased number of regionally funded shelter beds and/or a broader mandate/capacity of other shelters to house people with barriers. Another **435** persons were sheltered during **44** nights of Extreme Weather Response - the 'no-barrier shelter' within a shelter specifically designed to provide shelter on winter's coldest nights to those who for various reasons could or would not access shelter programs. The EWR program saw a **5%** increase in the number of people served from the previous year and EWR response nights increased by **13** nights, the last on March 28<sup>th</sup>. **One fifth** of the shelter users are the working poor; their primary issue is finding affordable housing.

Almost one in four people (**278**) live with addictions (**24%**) yet there remain little or no treatment resources and no detox on the North Shore. Of the individuals who identified addiction as an issue, only **80** went on to addiction treatment resources in Vancouver, demonstrating the acute need for local addiction treatment services. While we work with each shelter resident to develop a plan on resolving their homelessness, some need more assistance than others. We have had to advocate **493** times to overcome a decision or to encourage actions to be taken so that the client's intentions can move ahead. We intervened over **300** times when people needed immediate attention for a crisis or for First Aid. Money and medication management are two key tools we use to assist people gain stability and housing; medication assistance was given to **209** individuals and money or valuables management was given to **937** people. **112 (10%)** individuals were referred to mental health services, while **121**

(11%) were referred to addiction treatment. Each plan is developed with the individual concerned to meet their intentions during and after their shelter stay.

The vast majority of shelter users moved from the shelter into independent housing, with **241 (21%)** people finding self-contained apartments. **17 (2%)** individuals were hospitalized during the course of the year, **11** went to psychiatric facilities and **6** individuals went into medical hospitals. A critical issue is that **30% (337)** of the shelter users went to other shelters (**251, 22%**) or back to the streets (**86, 8%**) after their stay at the North Shore Shelter. As experienced in past years, many North Shore residents refuse to leave the North Shore for affordable housing, choosing to stay on the streets of the community they are from, and know so well. Others need services available only in other communities and we transfer them to our other shelters so they can access the services. A new project this year is for Outreach and the Shelter to do 3 and 6 month follow up on any client housed, that is, if they agree. The intent is to find out how effective we are at housing people, as well as to provide additional support, should that be needed.

With last year's secured funding for the North Shore Shelter program, the shelter has been able to build stronger relationships with local service providers and the local community. The position of Community Liaison Worker, thanks once again to the City of North Vancouver funding, allows Louise Warner to build relationships, foster communication and raise awareness around homelessness issues. Louise is the spokesperson for the Shelter and responds to and investigates all concerns or complaints that arise with regard to homelessness and will again facilitate and coordinate activities around Homelessness Awareness Week this fall and the various "Connect" days held throughout the year. We have many programs and new programs are being developed and implemented. Specialized workers, such as Karen Hobbs, from the MPA Society, Sandra Vasquez, CMHA and Vancouver Coastal Health's Nurse Practitioner, Sheila Turris continue their weekly services at the Shelter. One of this year's goals is to have a weekly Income Assistance worker onsite to guide and facilitate welfare application process. Another goal is to provide on-site counseling for our clients. The shelter is proud of our ever-growing list of client care services. AA and NA continue their weekly peer-support meetings, with membership growing steadily over the past year - AA has surpassed 20-persons at many of their meetings. The shelter's six-week, weekly Yoga fitness night program provides stress relief and a change of pace for many. New program ideas include more inclusive volunteer initiatives, the Training Kitchen, Community Kitchens, computer skills training, art classes, information sessions, in-house counseling and other programs for our clients.

We are extremely grateful for the donation from the **Inaugural North Shore Mayor's Tournament** and the **North Shore Community Foundation** that has enabled us to realize our goal of implementing the North Shore Training Kitchen. Ongoing funding for the cook positions is through the Shelter budget provided by BC Housing. This enables Lookout to use funds for our cook/trainer! Started after the fiscal year end, Don Guthro of A+ Projekt will be teaching shelter clients as well as others in the local community who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, basic employment skills that can be used anywhere. In addition, he will teach the skills needed to be able to secure employment in the Hospitality and Restaurant industry.



We would have been unable to sustain the operation of the shelter without the significant contributions of a number of donors, especially the Soroptimists of North and West Vancouver who assisted with connections, and personal donations of time, finances and advocacy. We also thank a few outstanding groups/individuals: the North Vancouver Lawn Bowling Club, St. John's Church, volunteer Ruth Kershaw who is our Volunteer Coordinator (an incredibly important and much appreciated job!), Ken Kerr, the Friday Group, members of the Har El Synagogue, Lynn Valley United Church, Highlands United Church, PEO Sisterhood Chapter AQ, North Shore Unitarian Church, The Parish of St. Christopher's, our sustaining Charles Curtis, Cobb's Bakeries, social service organizations and our partner agencies (most notably, Harvest Project, North Shore Crisis Service Society) as well as the many schools, businesses and residents who continue to bring in donations and provided over **2,358** hours of Volunteer services. We could not have provided many of these services without them! Thank you also to all North Shore staff, past and present, that have put in so many volunteer hours, personal commitment and fortitude to ensure the success and continued operation of this essential service.

## New Westminster Shelter

*This building offers 15 shelter spaces to men in New Westminster.*

This is the first year that Lookout has operated a Shelter in New Westminster, finally realizing a goal stretching from 1990 when we first applied for funding to open a local minimal barrier shelter so that New West folk were not forced into the Downtown Eastside. The New West Shelter is a 15-bed male-only resource that opened on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008 at the heritage College Place Hotel, funded by BC Housing. The shelter is co-located with 40 units of SRO permanent housing. Finding the building needed significant repairs; BC Housing has invested significant resources renovating the building, including the shelter in the redesign. For a period of time staff and construction crews were able to work together to keep our shelter guests housed and comfortable. But in December 2008, due to the problems found in the building during construction and concern about the clients in a building under renovation, the building had to be 100% vacated. The shelter made a temporary home in the basement of the Cliff Block, thanks to a lot of support from our neighbours, the City and the public. To make the relocation possible, minor renovations occurred to accommodate the shelter. We expect to move back in September 2009.

*"I was treated with kindness and empathy and it really made a difference." Steve W.*

The New Westminster Shelter provided **369 individuals** with shelter, food, support and assistance to link with needed services and housing. At the same time, **608** turnaways occurred, meaning that for approx every 2 people housed, 3 were turned away. Data from the shelter is difficult due the implementation of the new Lookout database. However, **5,192** bednights of service were provided, and occupancy was at **95%** despite being new, the moves and the renovations. The clients took all of this extremely well and have repeatedly thanked us for the extra efforts we made to ensure they had a roof over their heads. The staff are to be highly commended for working under such trying conditions and with positive grace, especially for moving people and things during the snowfalls immediately before Christmas!

Many of the clients served are "dual diagnosed" and the difficulty in accessing MH services in regards to assessments and housing is frustrating for both staff and our shelter guests. We started an in house **Dual Recovery Anonymous** meeting and we have a fairly high turnout even though attendance is not a requirement.

Although many clients have found "affordable housing" the majority had to leave New Westminster. For those seeking 28+ day addictions treatment very few have found it within our community. Many times problems occur with the new intake procedures, discouragement sets in and they end up falling back into old behaviors and eventually return to the shelter

*"All staff were very helpful and I was kept up to date with what was going on at all times."  
Ken*

system. There is a need for a lot more affordable housing with supports in New Westminster. Many of our shelter guests are not ready to live independently when leaving the shelter and look for supported housing. Frustration prevails when clients, primarily those with "co-occurring disorders" seek out places to live that can help them to deal with their issues surrounding mental health and addictions.

In the coming year we wish to work toward more accessible services for folks living with addictions, more client centered services that can better assist our clients, as well as "healthy and appropriate" affordable housing with supports. Our community also needs readily available MH assessment and dual diagnosed services.

## Burnaby Extreme Weather Shelter

*This shelter is an extreme weather response shelter, meaning that it opens when health risks to the absolute homeless are high. It is the only shelter in Burnaby, and provides 30 sleeping spaces to adult homeless men and women.*

Having operated the only shelter in Burnaby for two years, and it being only an extreme weather shelter, we were very thankful to the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness and Service Canada for funding for the next two winter periods. We remain committed to create a local full service shelter co-located with supported housing working in collaboration with Burnaby Progressive Housing. Extreme weather this past winter set all records: far from the 'norm' of **10** days per winter; this year we were open an astounding **47** nights, providing **1,494** sheltering spaces. **16%** of the shelter users were women. This would not have been possible if it was not for St. Francis de Sales Church and the extensive number of people who volunteered **294** shifts!

**Shelter Turnaway Experience by Fiscal Year (April 1 – March 31)**

MONTH	YEAR 1993/94	YEAR 1996/97	YEAR 2002/03	YEAR 2004/05	YEAR 2005/06	YEAR 2006/07	YEAR 2007/08	YEAR 2008/09
		initiate add'l winter only shelter	Yukon permanent shelter opens		NS permanent shelter opens			
APR	109	86	418	627	572	532	443	480
MAY	83	109	425	772	474	435	292	478
JUNE	37	81	412	362	469	568	440	399
JULY	50	84	389	499	649	476	266	411
AUG	78	129	410	438	455	642	384	392
SEPT	38	107	640	737	577	526	276	569
OCT	59	88	509	640	544	449	452	645
NOV	79	93	504	338	413	417	347	396
DEC	81	82	443	299	295	294	423	463
JAN	79	117	678	362	419	293	504	337
FEB	92	92	546	416	259	439	508	339
MAR	55	118	623	566	381	758	621	184
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>1,186</b>	<b>5,997</b>	<b>6,056</b>	<b>5,507</b>	<b>5,829</b>	<b>4,956</b>	<b>5,093</b>
<b>BED CAPACITY</b>	15,330	24,022	34,988	37,730	32,503	46,686	57,643	63,077

Note: Areas in yellow reflect times when only one shelter was operating (Downtown Shelter)

