

Need for homeless services could be increasing, officials say

by Mary Rupert

Wyandotte County is facing greater needs this year for homeless services, according to a United Way official.

Tom Radke, United Way community impact manager, said he has been hearing from member agencies and local officials who serve the homeless that needs are increasing.

He said the United Way recently received a federal grant of \$136,151 to be distributed to local agencies that

serve the homeless. The deadline for agencies to apply is Jan. 23.

Those who work with the homeless have cited high energy prices, a downturn in the economy, the housing crisis and foreclosures as reasons for an increase, Radke said.

There are some indications, such as an increased number of calls to shelters, that the number of homeless people is

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on the increase in the county, he said. Radke added it is not easy to substantiate exact numbers yet because of the lack of a permanent residence and mobility of the homeless.

A count of the homeless later this month, visiting places in the community where the homeless may be living, will help local agencies get a better count of the number of homeless here, he added.

A report by the Wyandotte County Homeless Services Coalition last year estimated 2,271 people were homeless in Wyandotte County, he said. Those figures may be a year old.

Radke said last year Wyandotte

County received \$126,533 for homeless services from the National Emergency Food and Shelter Program under the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Later in the year, \$24,534 was added to the total.

The funds are distributed to local food pantries, food kitchens, food vouchers, rent and mortgage assistance, and shelters.

Radke said any agencies that are interested in receiving funds for services may call him at 913-371-3674 by Jan. 23. A committee will decide how much will be allocated to each agency, he said.