

## We count to take care

Posted by [Editor S.Mack](#) On 01/28/2017

### Tent Community behind Nicolet Park on Bunker Hill Road in Lexington Park

**Lexington Park, MD** – Did you know there are women, men, and children living in tents and sleeping on mattresses in the woods all around Charles, St. Mary's and Calvert counties? A teacher in St. Mary's County said, "I had students who are in transitional housing situations and often will not have anything to eat over long weekends or breaks when schools are closed."

Every year in January, the Continuum of Care (CoC) network of public and private organizations located in Southern Maryland performs the Point-In-Time (PIT) Homeless Count. "On Wednesday, Jan. 25 members of the network in St. Mary's County began their count. It was 50 degrees this year, one of the warmest ever with no significant incidents to report," said Sgt. C. Grumbles, supervisor Lexington Park COPs Unit.

It will take approximately 2 to 3 weeks for the final unduplicated counts to be released. "Counting is done by volunteers such as The Mission, Life Styles, Three Oaks, the various food pantries, Department of Social Services (DSS), all three public libraries, the Soup Kitchen and in the northern end of the county we had some correctional officers from our county who volunteered to count," said, Cpl. T. Synder Lexington Park COPs Unit.

All volunteers are extensively trained on counting and recording procedures. "Everyone knew what to do, this was a significant event," said Cpl. Ray Lexington Park COPS Unit. The numbers were collected from the various sites around the county and then are entered into a computer for calculation per the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requirements and standards before they are released publicly.

So, why do we count? To track progress, satisfy requirements of HUD and to better understand the full scope of the homelessness situation currently.

Cpl. T. Synder told TheBayNet.com that there are several trails in the woods that lead to homeless tent communities in the county. "There is one behind Nicolet Park, in Charlotte Hall near the Park and Ride, and the park near Three Notch Trail," he said.

Cpl. Snyder said, "The trail behind Nicolet Park was made by a local man named Robert Long who is no longer homeless, but he would go back and forth through the trail to his tent. Others have just continued to use the trail going back into the woods to drink or use drugs." There have been as many as ten tents set up in the woods behind Nicolet Park hidden to the community of Lexington Park, he said. Once or twice a year, inmates from the Department of Corrections come to clean up debris left from the homeless people along the trail in the woods, Cpl. T. Synder told TheBayNet.com.

As we walked, Cpl. T. Synder asked, "Do you remember the woman who was found dead a little over a year ago in the woods? She was found just over there."

"It is against county ordinance for anyone to live in a tent on public property and if parks and recreation call us we have to go and tell the person that they must leave. We don't want to tell them they have to leave, we understand they have no place to go," said Cpl. T. Synder.

The officers of the Lexington Park COPs Unit have become actively involved community efforts to combat homelessness in the area by working cooperatively with the CoC network.

Contact Shertina Mack at [TheBayNet.com](http://TheBayNet.com)