

Tally Bronx homeless

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HUNDREDS OF volunteers will fan out across the Bronx early next week to count the homeless living in the borough — and you can join them in the undertaking.

The eighth annual Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE) is part of Mayor Bloomberg's plan to end chronic homelessness.

The count comes as the city is experiencing one of its worst homeless crises in recent years, with a record number of people entering the shelter system.

And while the count of so-called "street homeless" has plummeted since 2005, officials said next week's effort can be seen as a referendum on the success of city, the Department of Home-

Volunteers are needed to do boro count

less Services and social service organizations in getting people off the street and into the system.

"The count is very, very important," said Ken Small, development director at BronxWorks, a borough nonprofit that helps spearhead the count.

"Over the course of the last four or five years, the count here in the Bronx has come down tremendously and that is a testimony to the collaborations that has taken place to help the street homeless population."

Teams of volunteers and social workers will canvass parks, subways and other public spaces on Monday night and early Tuesday morning to collect basic demographic information and offer individuals shelter services.

"It's a reflection of how successful our new housing strategies have been," said DHS Commissioner Robert Hess.

"In the Bronx, BronxWorks has done a spectacular job. The 72% reduction is a tremendous accomplishment and this Monday and Tuesday we'll measure the success yet again and see if we've been able to maintain it or even do a little bit better."

New housing initiatives include Safe Haven facilities, where homeless can bunk down for the night without formally entering the shelter system.

Also, the city has provided "stabilization beds," where homeless can sleep while awaiting formal entry into permanent housing.

In the past, homeless would have stayed on the street until they were processed, Hess said.

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