



WHERE THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY MEETS

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ROLLOUT



# Agencies step up services for homeless people

Courtesy Springs Rescue Mission

By Jeanne Davant

**I**t may be inconvenient for people to stay home. It may be annoying not to be able to dine out at restaurants. But for homeless people, the COVID-19 pandemic is life-threatening.

“We realized pretty quickly just how much that population relied on drinking fountains and bathrooms, buildings like the library, and food that would be either left out for them by restaurants or that people would give them if they were downtown,” said Andy Barton, CEO of Catholic Charities.

People trying to escape homelessness who were enrolled in job training and life skills courses lost their access to these classes when they went virtual, as many

did not have the means to connect to the internet.

Many of those who were working in service industries lost their jobs. Those who are looking for work are finding that the jobs they’re seeking are not available.

The homeless population does not appear to have grown significantly in the past year, according to the leaders of local charities.

Last year, the annual Point in Time count conducted in January tallied 1,339 people who identified themselves as homeless, including 358 unsheltered people, according to the Pikes Peak Continuum of Care, a local decision-making group with the goal of ending homelessness. That represented a decrease from 2018.

The survey has been called off this year because of the

COVID-19 risk. Instead, it will count people staying in emergency shelters and temporary housing.

Regardless of the numbers, the pandemic has greatly increased pressure on agencies like Catholic Charities, Springs Rescue Mission and Homeward Pikes Peak to provide shelter, food and the means for people to lift themselves out of poverty and addiction.

Because of increased donations from businesses, non-profits and individuals, as well as additional state and federal funding, those agencies have been able to step up their assistance to meet the greater needs and difficulties the pandemic has imposed.

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## UNEMPLOYMENT FRAUD

An increase in new unemployment claims has also led to an uptick in fraud, experts say.



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