

Homeless in paradise

“When you’ve been living rough for a while, you know you stink. You feel bad, and you don’t want to get too close to people.”

This was just one issue Colleen Edlin had to deal with during her years moving from car to boat to huddled under a tarp in Anzac Bay as her dog Shadow kept watch.

Colleen, who’s now living in a converted horse float at Living Waters, says Ira Mata, Ira Tangata, Auckland’s first region-wide count of people living without shelter, is a good start when it comes to identifying the scale of homelessness.

“I was in Anzac Bay for a week or two; then I was in the skate park; then I was living in a container; then a sinking boat for a while.” - Colleen Edlin.



Colleen Edlin and her dog Shadow. Photo Sophie Boladeras

“I think they will find that the issue is way deeper than they thought,” she says.

On Monday 17 September a group of Waiheke volunteers were briefed via video feed, along with almost 700 other volunteers across Auckland on how to conduct themselves as they combed the streets for people sleeping rough or in their cars.

Local board member Shirin Brown took part in the count and said the group identified around 15 people living without shelter.

“Some were travellers, some were boat occupants, thankfully there were no chil-

dren,” says Shirin, who is proud that the Waiheke community is working together to support people who are struggling to secure suitable accommodation.

“This year sees the completion of the housing repair pilot to improve and maintain houses, so they remain safe to live in. Living Waters Church provides temporary accommodation if there is space, the Waiheke Housing Trust is working on providing affordable housing, and the local board is finalising a housing strategy,” she says.

“It’s not much but at least it is a drop in the ocean, and it shows how we try and

solve our community problems locally.”

Living Waters emergency accommodation coordinator Wiremu Te Taniwha also took part in the homeless count, in which volunteers used a mobile survey app to ascertain whether the people they met were homeless.

Volunteers were provided supermarket vouchers and beanies to give to people who took part in the survey, and Wiremu says he was surprised by some of the questions.

“When we found a vehicle where we thought someone might be sleeping, we approached them, introduced ourselves

TIP TRUCK & DIGGER HIRE

5 TON DIGGER
TIP TRUCK
SECTION CLEARING
DRIVEWAYS
EXCAVATIONS
PILE DRILLING
METAL SUPPLIES

PHONE PAUL WALDEN 0274864406

The power of print

72% of Kiwis prefer to read books in print

SOURCE: TWO SIDES NZ TOLLUNA SURVEY 2017

Waiheke Weekender

GULF NEWS



The Waiheke volunteer group counted approximately 15 homeless people on the island, half of whom were on work visas.

and asked if they would like to take part in a short survey."

"We were actually surprised by some of the questions which asked about sexual orientation and whether people had been imprisoned before - some of them were quite intrusive."

Wiremu says that if people were asleep in their vehicles, the volunteers didn't wake them and that half of the people they met were happy to take the survey, while others didn't want to take part.

"Around 50 percent of the people we

came across who were homeless or living rough on the island were from overseas and on work visas. The other people were locals."

Wiremu says he wasn't surprised by the number of homeless people living on the island.

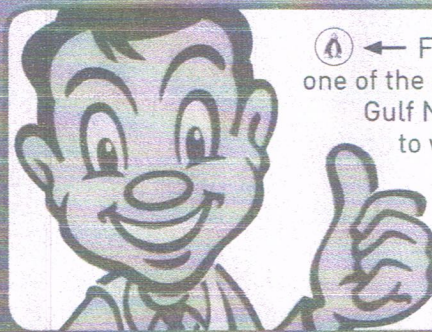
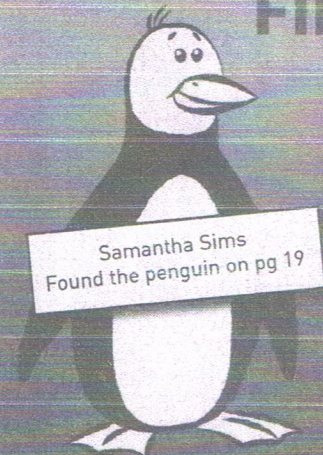
"I think there were more that we didn't capture because we didn't look in the bush for tents, or in really isolated places. It does raise the concern - what can we do about this? There are people who are struggling."

Wiremu says the number of homeless people on the island likely differs depending on the time of year and the group of volunteers is looking into holding another homeless count at a different point in time.

"We are thinking about doing something similar, during the height of the summer season, when the population swells."

"Some people say they're okay with the way they're living, but obviously if there's an opportunity for a person to live in a

FIND THE PENGUIN COMPETITION



Ⓐ ← Find this penguin hiding in one of the other ads in this week's Gulf News and go into the draw to win a \$25 voucher from Oneroa Four Square.



Drop your answer (with your name and contact details) in the box in the Gulf News office by 12pm Tuesday, or email accounts@waihekegulfnews.co.nz.

Brought to you by Oneroa Four Square 151 Ocean View Rd, Oneroa ph 372 7150 Open 7.30am - 8.30pm 7 Days