

SLNC Homelessness Committee: Year in Review

By Nithya V. Raman
Co-chair

The Silver Lake Neighborhood Council Homelessness Committee has been very active over the past year, and is planning a number of activities for the year to come. Our goal is to ensure that community members have a place to learn about homelessness and find ways to get involved as volunteers. We are also a resource for all of the different actions on homelessness being taken by elected officials and volunteer organizations. And we work with the SLNC Governing Board to put some of our neighborhood's money, time and advocacy efforts towards addressing these issue.

As co-chairs, our approach is to try and create a *compassion-first* approach in our neighborhood. This approach has emerged from our experiences meeting our unhoused neighbors, and understanding from them how hard it is to get the resources they need to get off the streets. In this part of the city, many of the homeless residents we meet are not just long time residents of Los Angeles – they are actually from Silver Lake too. They stay here because this is home for them. They may have friends or family who check on them, or who provide a place for them to shower or sleep on rainy nights.

Our co-chairs are also part of a regional neighborhood homeless coalition called SELAH, which brings volunteers together twice a month to do outreach to our homeless neighbors. Many of the other SELAH volunteers are also members of their own neighborhood councils, so we are able to coordinate our work across the region—and to make sure that resources are shared across neighborhoods.

Over this past year, we supported CD13 Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell's office in their efforts to bring increased services to this part of the city, including a Safe Parking site, permanent supportive housing, and hopefully bridge housing as well. Working with the offices of CD4 Councilmember David Ryu, Supervisor Sheila Keuhl and Assembly Member Laura Friedman, we were able to provide some funding and volunteer support for a very successful Homeless Connect Day in the parking lot of Friendship Auditorium, right here in Silver Lake. Volunteers from our Committee and from SELAH did outreach before the event to spread the word to our homeless neighbors, and staffed the event to ensure that attendees were able to access all the resources. We have also hosted regular visitors from the Mayor's Office and from our Councilmembers who have used our meetings to update Silver Lake residents about their plans on homelessness.

If you are interested in getting involved, we have a lot of work coming up in the New Year. Join us to for the annual homeless count in late January. Email committee co-chair darius.derakshan@silverlakenc.com if you are interested in being a volunteer. In late January or early February, our Committee is also hoping to host another drive and assembly day for hygiene kits for our homeless neighbors. We especially welcome young people to join us for that event, where we can provide them greater education about the homelessness issue.