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## WQAD

### National homeless report sparks local response

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Reporter

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ROCK ISLAND, Illinois

A new federal report shows that there are more families staying in homeless shelters. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development findings say that's almost certainly due to the ongoing effects of the recession.

The year-long study reports that families are also staying for longer periods of time in shelters. It includes figures that one in every 200 Americans spent at least one night in a shelter during 2009.

While individual homelessness declined by 5%, the numbers of homeless families increased for the second straight year. It's a national problem that hits close to home.

Falling on hard times and homeless, Kenny Anderson, now 49, turned to the Christian Care Rescue Mission six years ago.

"I don't know what I'd do without Christian Care," he said.

Now as the mission's cook, he's a shelter success story. Not just a statistic, he's reaching out to others and helping to turn lives around.

"Without our help, some people wouldn't get a really decent meal for the day."

But Christian Care is fighting an uphill battle. Already serving nearly 19,000 free meals this year, that's a 20% jump from 2009. The shelter space has been filled or overflowing every night this year.

"I sleep some in the TV room, or I'll put them in the chapel," said Pastor Rob Miltenberger, executive director. "We're just trying to take care of them."

While adults like Kenny successfully emerge from homelessness, it's a problem that's even tougher for teenagers. Some reasons behind a new program.

Scott Cunningham, 19, is helping to clean the Bettendorf riverfront on Wednesday. He's one of the first residents in a transitional housing program for homeless youth. Offered by Bethany for Children and Families, it provides stability, supervision and a fresh start.

"I was a little scared," Cunningham said. "At first, I was thinking I was just going to fall back to my old ways."

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The program is run with a federal grant and supported by a consortium of local agencies.

"Hopefully, they'll be done with their education, employed and able to move on to the next stage of life," said Ben Cleaveland, program supervisor.

Cunningham plans to get his high school diploma and attend college. He's hopeful instead of homeless.

"Some people don't know exactly what to do, what to take or how to handle it," he said. "This helps you a lot."

In response to the federal report, new help for the homeless in the Quad Cities.

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