

Library sponsors homelessness seminars

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The Del Norte County Library this week featured attorney Ryan Dowd presenting three training sessions on interacting with individuals experiencing homelessness.

Dowd said libraries are on the front lines of the issue, as homeless individuals often come there for shelter. “We give them a place where they feel safe. I think once you give people a place where they’re safe, they’re gonna’ be there,” said library board trustee Lupe Gutierrez.

Dowd is executive director of Hesed House, a homeless shelter outside of Chicago. He said he began volunteering there when he was just 13 years old.

In addition to working there, Dowd hosts webinars, travels for seminars and training sessions, and has written a book, “The Librarians’ Guide to Homelessness.”

His presentations in Crescent City focused on using empathy in interactions with those who are homeless.

Educators, policemen, politicians, medical professionals and nonprofit workers attended the workshops in the Del Norte Unified School District’s building on Washington Boulevard. The subjects included:

Helping individuals understand the world and mindset of someone who is homeless

Why punishment does not work very well for homeless individuals

The psychology of empathy and voluntary compliance

Practical tools for resolving problems effectively and compassionately.

Dowd's came to Del Norte County funded by a grant written by Gutierrez. "I hope that people [get] a better understanding of the homeless situation and its correlation to poverty, to treat all people with empathy and not punishment," said Gutierrez.