

ESRI Survey 123: Lessons Learned

Westchester Continuum of Care Partnership for the Homeless
2019 Point in Time Count of People Experiencing Homelessness



Who we are

Westchester Continuum of Care Partnership for the Homeless
(CoC)

Westchester CoC

- The Continuum of Care Program is designed by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban development (HUD)
- The CoC is a governing body made up of nonprofit providers, state and local agencies that receive federal funding
- The mission is to end homelessness
 - Ensure people experiencing homelessness have equal access to resources
 - maximize resources and reduce duplication of effort
- Program design & Development is the County's subcontractor to plan & coordinate the administrative activities of the CoC



What we set out to do

Count people experiencing homelessness using ESRI Survey 123

HUD Point-In-Time (PIT) Count

- Every year the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mandates that we conduct a count of people experiencing homelessness on what is, statistically, the coldest night of the year
- When it comes to funding housing and other programs that serve the homeless, HUD considers this count the best indicator of our level of need
- That makes this data extremely valuable and important

Counting people experiencing homelessness

- We count two groups of people the night of the count:
 - Sheltered
 - They are in a homeless shelter or transitional housing program
 - Unsheltered
 - They are sleeping outside, in a vehicle, or another location not designed for human habitation
 - This is where we used ESRI Survey 123 to pin-point the location of each person



How we planned to use ESRI survey 123

Counting people who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness

ESRI Survey 123 as a PIT Data Tool

- We were able to access HUD's survey in ESRI Survey 123 and add custom questions specific to Westchester
 - Example: in Westchester we are studying the likelihood that someone who spends time in the foster care system will go on to become homeless, so we ask them if they have been in foster care

The Survey

Is this the first time you have experienced homelessness?*

Yes

No

Don't Know/Refused

How long have you been experiencing homeless this time?*

Number of days

123

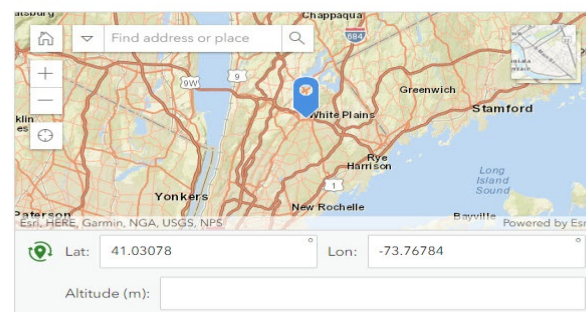
Where did you last have a permanent home?*

Institution (ex. foster care, jail)

Home

Don't know/ Refused

Location*



The map shows the White Plains area in New York, with a blue location pin placed in the center. The map includes labels for Chappaqua, Greenwich, Stamford, White Plains, Rye, Harrison, New Rochelle, Yonkers, and Bayville. A search bar at the top left contains the text "Find address or place". Below the map, there are input fields for latitude and longitude, and an altitude field.

Lat: 41.03078 Lon: -73.76784

Altitude (m):

The Plan

- We sent 13 teams of 2-4 people, equipped with ESRI Survey 123 on their smartphones
- ESRI Survey 123 allowed us to have a separate survey for those we were able to speak to and those who declined to speak to us but still needed to be included in the census
- ESRI Survey 123 allowed us to pin-point the exact locations we encountered people in order to:
 - Continue to engage with people we met moving forward with the goal of connecting them to housing
 - Create record of locations we should visit routinely



What actually happened

Spoiler alert: things did not go as planned

IT WAS GREAT...THEN WE ADDED PEOPLE

The realization that things were taking a turn began when someone handed me this at the volunteer training



IT WAS
GREAT...THEN
WE ADDED
PEOPLE

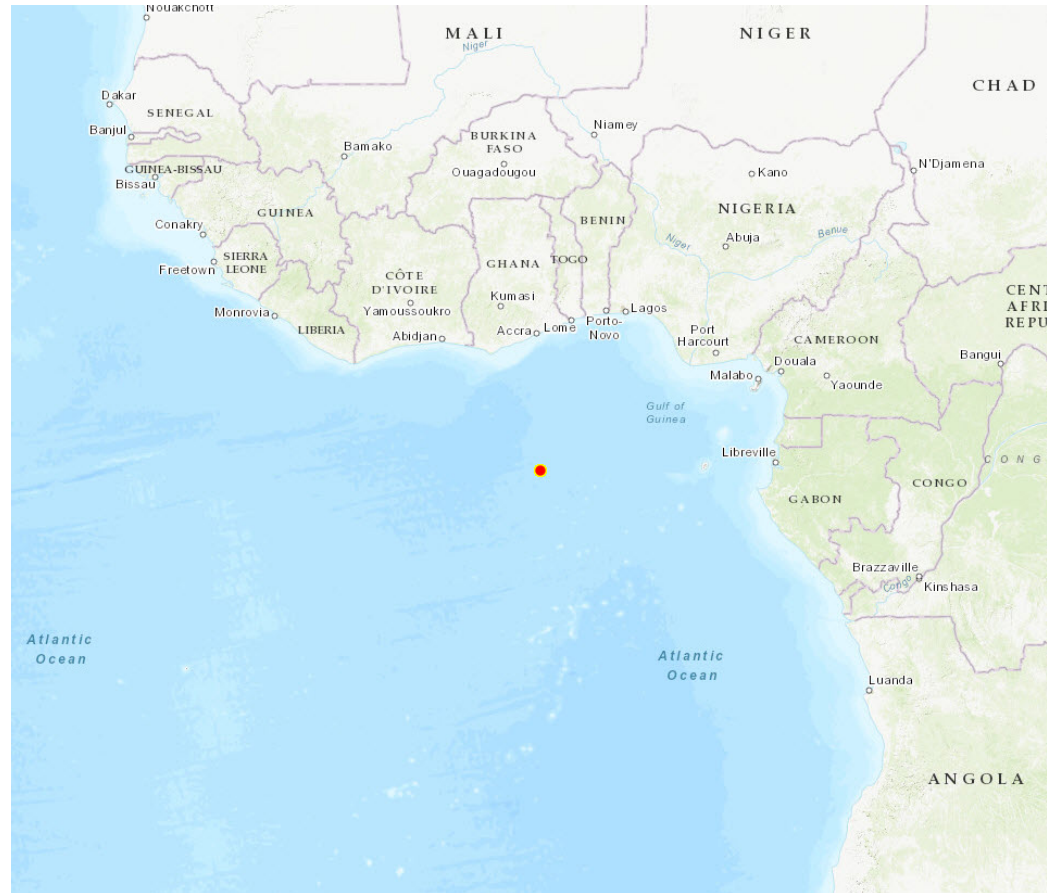
- Our team of homeless outreach professionals and community volunteers were not ready for a high tech operation
 - As unreliable as the devices were, their networks were worse. We spent hours trying to walk people in the field through there difficulties and some survey results had to be called in

IT WAS
GREAT...THEN
WE ADDED
PEOPLE
(and the little
wheel of
doom)



IT WAS GREAT...THEN WE ADDED PEOPLE

Because questions about individuals who agreed to be surveyed were connected to a separate table from the census questions, we found ourselves with dozens of records on Null Island; the place where the equator meets the prime meridian in the Atlantic off the coast of Western Africa.



IT WAS
GREAT...THEN
WE ADDED
PEOPLE

- Worst of all – we did not send folks out with a paper back up!



We got the job done

We located and provided outreach to 32 unsheltered people

In addition to being surveyed, each person was offered

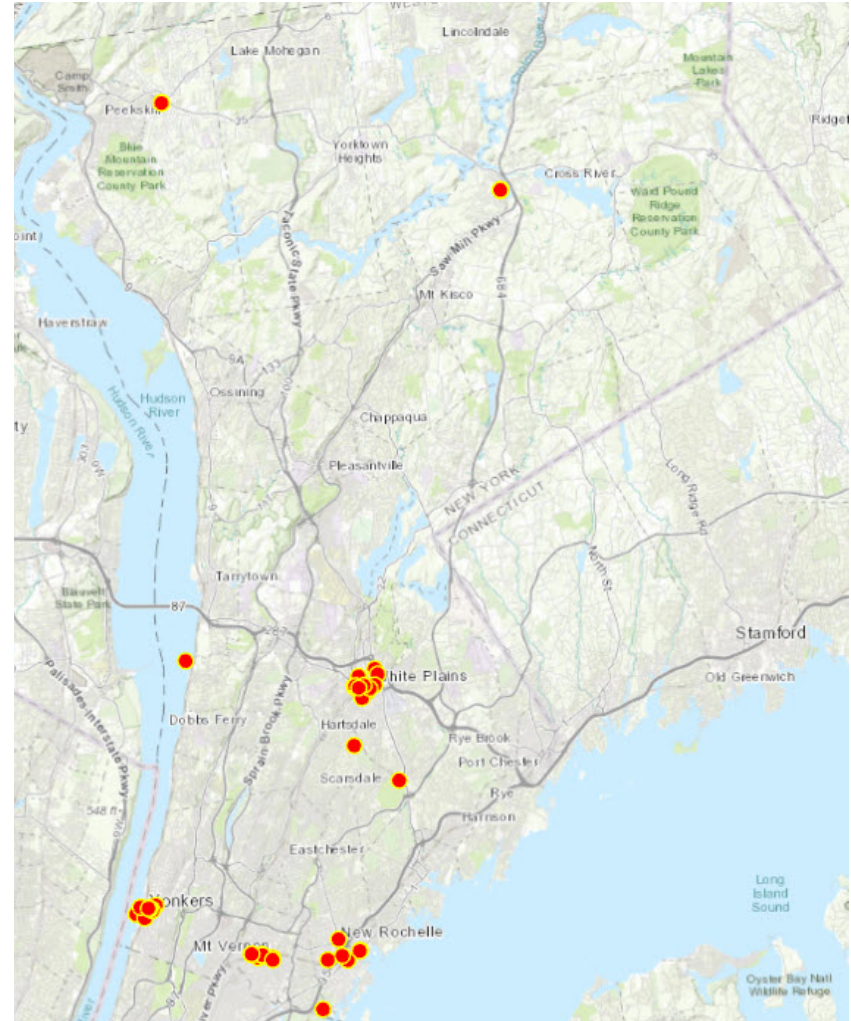
- Transportation to shelter

- A complete meal

- A care package including thermal socks

- A Dunkin Donuts gift card

- A wallet size resource book





What We Learned

Now that we know better we can do better

Our Team is Amazing

- Everyone who worked on planning the count was excellent at communicating throughout the process
- Even when things went sideways our outreach workers and volunteers made it work
- Our volunteers reported having a very positive experience and plan to come back

ESRI is Making Constant Improvements

- When we circled back to try to grab screen shots of some of the areas where we struggled – most have already been fixed
 - Bye-bye loading wheel!

The 2020 Point in Time Count

- The Westchester GIS team will provide us with uniform devices which are all linked to a reliable carrier
- We'll conduct more intensive & frequent training on the ESRI Survey 123 app
- There will be a paper back up!



Learn More & Keep in Touch

- About the Continuum of Care program:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/>
- About the Westchester CoC:
<https://www.wcohomeless.org>
- Review the Westchester CoC PIT Count data
<https://www.wcohomeless.org/2019-pit-count-data>
- Volunteer for the 2020 PIT!
<https://www.wcohomeless.org/volunteer-opportunities/>

- Contact your presenters:

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