



DEREK QUIZON/THE REPUBLIC

Councilman Corey Woods serves chicken to a homeless woman at a barbecue for the homeless. Vice Mayor Shana Ellis and Councilman Joel Navarro also volunteered.

City's barbecue for homeless raises awareness over heat

By Derek Quizon

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The beginning of summer always brings the threat of heat-related injuries, particularly for one of the most vulnerable segments of Tempe's population — the homeless.

Members of the City Council joined volunteers and employees of the Tempe Community Action Agency to help raise awareness of the problem at a barbecue dinner Wednesday for homeless people.

Council members Joel Navarro and Corey Woods and Vice Mayor Shana Ellis were among the officials helping prepare the meal for about 40 people at the Community Christian Church near College Avenue and Broadway Road.

The three officials took turns cooking corn on the cob and chicken, provided by the Santa Barbara Catering Company, on the grill outside of the church.

Navarro stressed the importance of providing services for the homeless during the sweltering summers.

"When you're out in the sun, running around trying to find food and water, you do fall victim to heat stroke," Navarro said, calling it "a serious problem," especially in the Phoenix area.

City and county officials have expressed concern over the increase in the

homeless population as temperatures climb well above 100 degrees.

According to the Maricopa Association of Governments, the number of homeless people in the county has dropped 6 percent in the past year, but the number of families on the street has increased by 27 percent and the number of young people on the street has increased by 30 percent.

The troubling trend, said TCAA staff member Sam Sumner, is reflected in shelters around Tempe.

"Generally, what you're seeing is renters whose landlords have lost their apartment building, and thus have been put out in the street," Sumner said. "People who have lost their jobs, people who have hit hard times ... not chronically homeless people."

The Community Christian Church is one of 12 churches across Tempe participating in TCAA's Interfaith Homeless Emergency Lodging Program, or I HELP for short. The churches provide a shelter and food for homeless people, and the addition of shower booths this year means clients can freshen up at any location.

TCAA is looking for volunteers, monetary donations and sponsor partnerships. Community members interested in helping can find more information on their website at tempeaction.org.