



The Homebrew for the Homeless contest is just one of the events that are a part of the annual Tahoe Beach Bash.  
COURTESY/TAHOE COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

## Helping out

### Tahoe Beach Bash

It may seem like the beautiful, all-season setting of South Lake Tahoe wouldn't have homeless citizens. But, like most American cities, there is a group of working poor that needs the community's help. This is where the Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless can help out, and this weekend features an event to that end.

The Tahoe Beach Bash on July 20 features an annual Homebrew for the Homeless contest, in which local brewers vie for a year's bragging rights while raising funds for the Coalition. The event includes live music, beer and wine tastings, a beach-side barbecue, games and face-painting for small people, vendors and a silent auction.

Four-year Coalition board member Tiffany Grimes said the family-friendly Beach Bash is her group's main fundraiser for the year. The Coalition has summer outreach and relief programs, and its major work is done in the winter, as it sponsors a warm room during the long and cold season.

"We set up some beds and cots to give the homeless a warm place to stay from the end of December all the way through April," Grimes said.

This past winter, the warm room had an average of 25 guests each night, for a total of 113 people during the season. About a quarter of the guests are considered chronically homeless, which means that they have been homeless for a full year or more, or homeless four times or more in the past three years.

Grimes said the location of the warm room changes each season.

"We don't have a building or a facility, so we have to find a vacant place,"

she said of her all-volunteer group. "Last year, it was a former dentist's office, and we just had people put cots and bunk-beds everywhere. It is a struggle, but it's a great cause—and we'd love to get more people involved."

The Coalition also helps the homeless get more stability when they can. There were 24 people who found housing with the group's support last winter, while eight others found work.

"Through the whole year, we go into the encampments and any area where there's a gathering of homeless people to do counseling and help with jobs," Grimes said. "We do everything we can to get them back to a home."

Grimes agreed that the Tahoe homeless may seem like an invisible problem, but she said that it is definitely present.

"Walking down our streets, you won't see that many in the casino areas, but you will see lots of homeless people in the woods because they have encampments," she said. "There are also many homeless youths who live in cars, with their families, or they are couch-surfers."

Jobs are also needed. Tellingly, 21 percent of people who used the warm room last season had work in Tahoe, including the food and beverage industry, retail and ski resorts.

"That's one of the statistics that people don't really understand: homeless people here do have jobs," Grimes said. "People have such a negative connotation of the homeless, a stigma around it, until you really dig deep into it. Some people here really are one paycheck away from being homeless."

The Tahoe Beach Bash takes place from noon to 4 p.m. July 20 at Tahoe Beach Retreat, 3411 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe, California. Get tickets and more details at [tahoehomeless.org](http://tahoehomeless.org).

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