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Homeless Street Count Down 36 Percent

PHOENIX (April 26, 2011) – On, January 25, 2011, volunteers fanned out across the region and counted a total of 1,749 people experiencing homelessness, a 36 percent decrease from 2010. The annual point-in-time count provides a snapshot of homelessness in the region. This year marks the second annual decrease in the number of people on the streets. For those working tirelessly across the region to end homelessness, the decrease indicates that progress is being made.

These numbers reflect a count of homeless people on the streets and do not include people staying in shelters, doubled up (sharing housing with family or friends), or not seen that day. Historically, volunteers would determine a person was homeless through observation or knowledge of the individual’s history. This year, for the first time, homelessness was determined using a survey. This more intensive method produces more accurate results, but also makes it more difficult to compare results with previous years. A decrease was also noted in the annual Homeless Shelter Count conducted by the Department of Economic Security. There were 4,304 people in emergency and transitional shelters on the night of the count, a decrease of four percent.

“A number of factors may be contributing to the lower number of people experiencing homelessness,” said City of Tempe Councilwoman Shana Ellis, chair of the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) Continuum of Care Regional Committee on Homelessness. “Over the past couple of years, stimulus programs that provide eviction prevention for people on the verge of homelessness and rapid re-housing for people on the streets have had a positive impact in the community,” Ellis added. “For example, the Tempe Permanent Supportive Housing Pilot project is housing 35 chronically homeless people.” The impact of the federal stimulus funding seems to be making a difference on a national level as well. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released 2010 national point-in-time counts last week which showed relatively no change from 2009, suggesting that federal programs, such as Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing are responsible for curbing a potential increase in homelessness resulting from the recession.

Ellis added that the Human Services Campus has partnered with the Arizona Behavioral Health Corporation to provide housing for 47 chronically homeless people, and Project H3: Home, Health, Hope has housed 29 chronically homeless and medically vulnerable people. There are other coordinated efforts taking place within the community, such as monthly Project Connect events conducted by the Valley of the Sun United Way and efforts to prevent and end homelessness among veterans. These are just a few examples of work that is truly making a difference in the community, said Ellis.

The point-in-time Homeless Street Count, coordinated by MAG with volunteer street count coordinators in the region, is part of a national effort to identify the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The street count is part of the application to HUD for homeless assistance funding. The funding provides transitional housing, permanent supportive housing and supportive services to more than 53 programs in the region. This year, for the first time, homeless veterans were included in the street count. Individuals and families were surveyed to determine if they have ever served in the US military. Fourteen percent of the people on the streets were found to be homeless veterans.

The table below provides details of the street count results. Attached is additional information on the number of people counted in each municipality.

2011 Homeless Street Count Results			
	2011	2010	Percent Change (+/-)
Street Count Total	1,749	2,729	-36%
Adults	1,683	2,493	-32%
Children (under the age of 18)	66	236	-72%
Sub-populations			
Non-Chronic Individuals	889	1,791	-50%
Chronic Individuals	789	615	+28%
People in Families	8	142	-94%
Youth on Their Own	63	181	-65%
Veterans	247		

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