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County Executive, Councilmembers, and Organizations Announce Results from Outreach Survey

Data on homelessness emerges from 369 surveys conducted throughout the County

ROCKVILLE, MD, November 21, 2013—During Montgomery County 100,000 HOMES Campaign Registry Week, over 300 volunteers participated in a variety of activities, including canvassing the county surveying homeless individuals for three days on November 4–6 from 4:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. using a Vulnerability Index questionnaire. The Vulnerability Index is based on research by Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, which demonstrated that certain medical conditions place homeless individuals at a higher risk of dying if they remain homeless. Volunteers from Montgomery County 100,000 HOMES Campaign, a local partnership that includes Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless (MCCH), Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, and many other government agencies, nonprofits, and organizations, surveyed 369 individuals for the Campaign’s Registry Week.

Teams canvassed the streets, woods, and shelters, and covered "hot spots" in Rockville, Aspen Hill, Gaithersburg, Germantown, White Flint, Silver Spring, Bethesda, Wheaton, Glenmont, Langley Park, Chevy Chase, Hillandale, and White Oak. Volunteer teams captured data on health conditions, hospitalizations, length of homelessness, and much more. Of those surveyed, 159 individuals (43%) were considered to be medically vulnerable.

“There was an overwhelming response of volunteer service from the community and Campaign partners to make our Registry Week a success,” says 100,000 HOMES Campaign Manager Herb Smith. “Montgomery County continues to show that there is nothing stronger than a unified, focused community that realizes a problem anywhere in Montgomery County is a problem everywhere in Montgomery County.”

Results from the Campaign’s Registry Week were shared at the community debrief on Wednesday, November 13. The speakers included County Executive Isiah Leggett; Susie Sinclair-Smith, MCCH; Uma Ahluwalia, Department of Health and Human Services; Nadim Khan, Special Needs Housing; Fred Swann, Housing Opportunities Commission; Jasper Young, formerly homeless and now permanently-housed MCCH client; and Councilmembers Craig Rice, George Leventhal, and Nancy Floreen.

At the event, County Executive Isiah Leggett stated: “I’ve always said that in order to fully address a problem, you must first recognize that you have a problem. And believe it or not, there are far too many people in Montgomery County who are not aware of the nature of the complex problem of homelessness in the county.”

Council Vice President Craig Rice said he had an “eye-opening experience” volunteering during Registry Week. On his first day out, he encountered a man at a bus stop in 34-degree weather. “And he was in a T-shirt and was coughing and hacking,” Rice said. “There’s no question to me that that man is not going to survive this winter if we don’t intervene and get him help. It is life or death.”

County Councilmember George Leventhal, who served on the Campaign leadership team and participated every morning in Registry Week, said that the county needs to focus on increasing the supply of affordable housing in order to get people off the streets. Along with Councilmembers Craig Rice and Nancy Navarro, Leventhal said he is introducing a supplemental appropriation for \$700,000 to house 15 homeless individuals “right away.” The funds will go towards housing 15 clients for 18 months along with the necessary case-work and staff support.

The public hearing on the special appropriation is scheduled for Tuesday, December 3 at 1:30 p.m. in the County Council building, 3rd floor hearing room, located at 100 Maryland Ave, Rockville, MD. The media and community supporters are encouraged to attend.

“We’ve been delving deep into this; we’ve been doing the work; we’ve been doing the research,” Leventhal said. “We’ve all learned from each other, we’re working together much more closely than we ever did before, and we’re going to keep the momentum going.”

Registry Week is a critical part of the 100,000 HOMES Campaign, but there is still more work to do to make sure that the more than 1,000 homeless people in Montgomery County find housing.

“As a community, it’s important we continue to keep the issue of homelessness in the forefront,” said MCCH Executive Director Susie Sinclair-Smith. “Support will still be needed from the community as we work on the critical task of housing our most vulnerable neighbors in permanent, stable housing.”

Key Registry Week Survey Results

- 431 homeless individuals were identified
- 369 surveys were completed; 62 individuals declined to be surveyed
- 270 males and 99 females completed surveys

Age

- Average age was 45.6 years old
- 9% or 32 individuals were under the age of 25
- 24% or 88 individuals were over the age of 55
- 4% or 15 individuals were over the age of 65

Health Conditions and Hospitalizations

- 47% reported at least one serious health condition—of this group, 74% were medically vulnerable and have a higher likelihood of dying in a state of homelessness
- 23% were characterized as tri-morbid, meaning that they had a mental health diagnosis, a physical health condition, and an active history of substance abuse—of this group, the average length of time being homeless was 6 years
- The 369 individuals surveyed reported a total of 677 inpatient hospitalizations in the past year
- 22% of those surveyed received inpatient emergency room treatment at least 3 times last year—of those identified as medically vulnerable, more than 50% received inpatient treatment at least 3 times last year

Other

- 31 individuals reported having veterans status
- 26% of those surveyed were victims of violent attacks while experiencing homelessness