

Grand Rapids Area Coalition to End Homelessness

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 23, 2016

POINT IN TIME COUNT NUMBERS DOWN 12%

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, May 23, 2016 – The Grand Rapids Area Coalition To End Homelessness has released **preliminary results** for 2016 from its annual **Point In Time (PIT) count** of people experiencing homelessness on a given night in Kent County. Every U.S. community that receives federal funding support for its homelessness work must conduct an annual count of people staying in emergency shelter and transitional housing, as well as those without shelter.

This year's count in Kent County was conducted for the night of **January 27**. Instead of utilizing community volunteers, as in previous years, experienced outreach staff teamed up with other experienced professionals to canvas pre-identified areas around Kent County. **Forty-one people were identified as sleeping in places "not fit for human habitation"** on that night, when temperatures ended up being relatively mild for a January night in Michigan.

Organizations that provide shelter for individuals and families generally enter information into a statewide information system known as HMIS – Homeless Management Information System. That information was verified by staff to ensure its accuracy and submitted to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), along with the "unsheltered" count, on May 2. The data will eventually become part of an annual report to Congress on the effectiveness of HUD's programs.

This year's count showed an overall **12% decrease over last year's count**. The data will be used, **along with information from several other sources**, to understand the extent and scope of homelessness in Kent County and as one of the tools that help the community plan and adjust its response.

The Coalition believes that the **solution to homelessness is housing**. A year ago it updated its strategic plan, focusing intensely on identifying people with the highest level of need and getting them into permanent housing as quickly as possible, along with vital supportive services, under what is known as the **"Housing First" model**.

The Grand Rapids Area Coalition to End Homelessness is a collaboration of over 50 organizations and is part of the Kent County Essential Needs Task Force. In 2004 it facilitated development of a plan to address the root causes of homelessness and get people into permanent housing as quickly as possible. Heart of West Michigan United Way supports this work as the Coalition's fiduciary and employer of record.

A summary document (also attached) and additional detail reports are available on the Coalition website - <http://endhomelessnesskent.org/about/point-in-time-count/>.

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