



Margot Ackermann
Research and Evaluation Director
(804) 343-2045 Ext. 11: Ofc.
(804) 869-3746: Cell
mackermann@homewardva.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Preliminary Data Shows Homelessness Decreasing in Richmond
Homeward releases preliminary data from summer 2010 Point in Time Count

Richmond, VA – Homeward, the Greater Richmond region’s planning and coordinating agency for homeless services, today released initial findings from its 4th Annual Summer Point in Time Count. The twice-yearly census provides a snapshot of the number of people experiencing homelessness on a single day. Preliminary results reveal 891 people in the region experiencing homelessness on July 29, 2010. This number reflects a 16% decrease in the total number of people experiencing homelessness since July 2009. Additionally, the number of unsheltered individuals – those living under bridges, outdoors, in cars, and other places not meant for human habitation – has decreased 12%, and the number of homeless children has decreased 8%.

“In spite of the poor economy, partnerships and prevention are working in the Richmond area. Service providers in the Richmond area are preventing people from losing their housing in the first place and getting them into permanent housing,” said Margot Ackermann, Research and Evaluation Director at Homeward. “From January to July last year, we saw the length of time families stayed in shelters cut in half - and this has huge implications for the children and the quality of people's lives.”

July 2010 Point-In-Time Count

OVERALL POPULATION		
Total point-in-time	891	16% decrease
Total children in point-in-time count	143	8% decrease
UNSHelterED POPULATION		
Unsheltered	119	12% decrease

These data show that progress is being made to help people experiencing homelessness. However, prevention is the other side of this coin, and these point-in-time data do not reflect our community’s demand for homelessness prevention. Over the past year, we have spent over \$1 million in federal funds to prevent over 1000 people from losing their housing. We hear from our service providers that the demand for these services remains. This tells us that we must continue to address the needs of people with unstable housing.

In addition to performing a count of people experiencing homelessness, individuals also completed a detailed survey conducted by local volunteers. Answers to the 70-question survey are used to obtain specific information on how to better respond to the issue of homelessness.

“We need to continue to focus on connecting people with mainstream resources and deal with the consequences of the poor economy. For many people, all they need is a job, which may be hard to come by these days. And we need to build on the successes that we're seeing, particularly with families and people living on the street,” said Kelly King Horne, Executive Director of Homeward.

In September Homeward will release comprehensive findings from the count, including results from questions on a variety of economic indicators and health-related topics.

The primary site for the count and survey was the weekly lunch program at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Richmond and included a resource fair with medical screenings, benefits information, and free haircuts. The point-in-time count was also conducted in secondary areas in the City of Richmond and the counties of Chesterfield, Hanover, and Henrico in cooperation with local social services and law enforcement agencies and area shelter staff. For a complete list of preliminary data and partnering agencies, visit <http://www.homewardva.org/summerdata>.

About Homeward

With approximately 1,000 homeless children, single adults and families at a given point in time in Greater Richmond, Homeward is the regional catalyst to research, report and coordinate resources for people experiencing homelessness. In collaboration with regional partners in the City of Richmond and the counties of Chesterfield, Henrico, Hanover, New Kent, Powhatan, Charles City and Goochland, Homeward facilitates service provider trainings, client resource fairs, and conducts twice yearly point-in-time counts of those at-risk and who are currently in the sheltered and unsheltered population. In 2008 Homeward launched the Ten Year Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in the Richmond Region. For more information on Homeward, visit www.homewardva.org.

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