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Point-in-Time Count Indicates 22% Drop in Central Arkansas Homeless Population Since 2013

Little Rock, Arkansas (September 15, 2015) – A comprehensive count has revealed a significant drop in central Arkansas’s homeless population over the past two years. The annual Point-In-Time Count is mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) and coordinated by Central Arkansas Team Care for the Homeless (CATCH). This year’s Point-In-Time Count, which was conducted on January 27, 2015, tallied 830 homeless people in central Arkansas residing in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, or “unsheltered” locations. The count of unsheltered homeless people is included in the overall count on a biannual basis, so the 2013 Point-In-Time Count is the most recent relevant comparison for the 2015 numbers.

The decrease in homeless population was observed in every age category, in both sheltered and unsheltered counts, and among key homeless subpopulations as well, as shown in the table below. The biggest drops were seen in young adults ages 18-24 (68% decrease); unsheltered homeless people (33% drop); and chronically homeless people (41% drop).

Central Arkansas Point-In-Time Homeless Count Data; 2013-2015 Comparison				
		2013	2015	Change
Breakouts	Total	1,066	830	-22%
	Children	51	43	-16%
Age Categories	Young adults	137	44	-68%
	Adults	878	743	-15%
Sheltered Status	Unsheltered	503	339	-33%
	Sheltered	563	491	-13%
Key Homeless Subpopulations	Veterans	260	190	-27%
	Chronically Homeless	364	215	-41%

The 2015 total also continues a longer-term trend of decline in the central Arkansas homeless population, down 42% from the 2009 Point-In-Time Count total of 1,425 homeless people.

The 2015 Point-In-Time Count was part of a national effort by HUD to count homeless populations in every part of the country, using detailed standards, procedures, definitions, and guidelines laid out by HUD.

CATCH is a membership agency comprised of local homeless providers and other stakeholders involved in addressing homelessness. As the local “Continuum of Care” agency, CATCH has

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responsibility for applying for, allocating, and overseeing certain HUD homeless funds as well as conducting coordinating activities in the community such as the annual Point In Time Count.

The 2015 Point-In-Time Count was a complex effort involving dozens of local agencies and volunteers. CATCH board members and member agency staff were directly involved in the count, as were staff of the Little Rock HUD Field Office. Other agencies participating included The Van, the University of Arkansas Little Rock School of Social Work, Recovery Centers of Arkansas, Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System, Little Rock Community Mental Health Center, the City of Little Rock, the City of Jacksonville, Salvation Army, Fishnet Missions, and others.

“We still have a ways to go to eliminate homelessness in central Arkansas,” said Theresa Watson, President of the CATCH Board of Directors. “But these numbers give us encouragement that our efforts to better coordinate and target homeless services are having an impact.”

One key factor in the drop is the increase in availability of homeless assistance programs that cover all or part of the cost of rent and utilities to enable homeless people to live in permanent rental housing. These programs are called Permanent Housing, if they are open-ended, or Rapid Rehousing, if they have a time limit (usually 18-24 months). Emphasizing these types of programs has been a national priority for HUD, and CATCH and its member agencies have responded by significantly increasing the availability of these programs in central Arkansas. The number of homeless clients served by these types of programs has more than doubled since 2011, from 392 on the Point-In-Time Count date in 2011 to 994 on the Point-In-Time Count date in 2015.

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