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AGRM ISSUES 22ND ANNUAL SNAPSHOT SURVEY OF THE HOMELESS

Data reveals never-before-homeless and victims of physical violence seeking assistance.

Colorado Springs, Colo. (Nov. 23, 2011) — Nearly one in five people experiencing homelessness (21%) have been the victims of physical violence within the past twelve months. According to the 22nd annual *Snapshot Survey* from the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions (AGRM), those reporting such recent assaults have risen 6 percent from the same time last year.

“It’s not uncommon for the stress of personal economic woes to trigger anger and aggressive behavior,” said Association of Gospel Rescue Missions President John Ashmen. “It’s quite possible that the uptick in physical violence that mission guests are reporting is due to a friend or family member’s feeling of desperation and helplessness accompanying their unemployment and underemployment.”

The survey, completed in October by almost 19,000 individuals at 114 gospel rescue missions in North America, provides a valuable snapshot of those seeking assistance from rescue missions. According to the 2011 *Snapshot Survey* data, 35 percent of people experiencing homelessness on a given night are homeless for the first time. Furthermore, 17 percent identify themselves as not currently homeless, suggesting a level of need congruent with those on the brink of homelessness.

“Unfortunately, nothing in the report is a huge surprise,” Ashmen added. “The plight of the desperate and destitute is continuing—and our member missions are on the front lines, caring for the casualties of poverty and poor choices. Our member missions are pretty much filled to capacity, sleeping people on mats in common space when they run out of beds in their dorms. And rarely are there empty chairs at their tables whenever meals are served. In fact, many missions are now also sending boxes of food into the surrounding neighborhoods on a regular basis.”

Ashmen continues, “Some public figures like to give the impression that government programs are curbing homelessness and hunger. We certainly aren’t seeing it.”

“This year just over 2,000 people stayed in our shelter who have never been homeless before,” said Bill Roscoe, Boise Rescue Mission executive director. “We’ve seen quite a significant increase in numbers with

women and children. In two years the average daily population in our women's and children shelter more than doubled.”

While single individuals represent the largest served population (86% of total surveyed), women with children are still the most frequently served family unit (52% of total families). Couples without children grew by 8 percent from the previous year, to 20 percent of total families. Lastly, 12 percent of families are men with children, an increase of 3 percent from the previous year.

“Unemployment and poverty is so severe in West Virginia,” said Rex Whiteman CEO of Charleston's Union Mission Ministries. “We are feeding close to 50,000 individuals (15,000 families) a month who are at risk of becoming homeless. Many of these people simply have a roof over their heads, are merely existing and with difficulty trying to make it through life.”

The characteristics of sheltered homeless individuals are much different than those of sheltered families. Individuals are more likely to be White (50%) men (74%) over the age of 30 (67%), often caught in the web of addiction and/or mental illness (30%), and whom have seen a breakdown of family support. Some can be classified as chronically homeless (27%), experiencing homelessness three or more times before (24%), but a higher percentage (35%) is homeless for the very first time.

Among the people surveyed, 14 percent are veterans, 25 percent of which served in Vietnam. Eighty-two percent of all individuals come to the mission daily and a wide majority of the sample prefers to receive assistance from an agency with a spiritual emphasis.

Every year, faith-based ministries that are members of AGRM serve between 40 and 50 million meals, provide 15–20 million nights of lodging, distribute more than 25 million pieces of clothing, bandage the wounds of hundreds of abuse victims, and graduate close to 20,000 men and women from addiction-recovery programs and into productive living.

Founded in 1913, the Colorado Springs-based AGRM is North America's oldest and largest network of independent crisis shelters and rehabilitation centers, offering radical hospitality in the name of Jesus. With approximately 275 member missions, AGRM exists to proclaim the passion of Jesus toward the hungry, homeless, abused, and addicted; and to accelerate quality and effectiveness in member missions. For more information, visit www.agrm.org, or call (800) 4RESCUE.

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Snapshot Survey Homeless Statistical Comparison

Individuals Surveyed: 18,771 | Participating Missions: 114 | Families with children: 1,840 | Individuals in long-term rehab: 4,883

	2011	2010	2009	2008
<u>Gender</u> (of total mission population)				
Male	74%	75%	75%	74%
Female	26%	25%	25%	26%
<u>Age Groups</u> (of total mission population)				
Under 18	7%	9%	9%	12%
18–25	9%	9%	8%	9%
26–35	18%	15%	17%	18%
36–45	25%	22%	25%	26%
46–65	39%	40%	38%	31%
65+	3%	4%	3%	4%
<u>Race/Ethnic Groups</u> (of total mission population)				
White/Caucasian	50%	-	-	-
Black or African American	34%	-	-	-
Hispanic, Latin, or Spanish origin	9%	-	-	-
Asian	1%	-	-	-
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2%	-	-	-
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0%	-	-	-
Other or 2+ races	3%	-	-	-
Single individuals (of total mission population)	86%	-	-	-
<u>Women/Children/Families</u> (of family units identified)				
Couples	20%	12%	13%	15%
Women with children	52%	57%	60%	66%
Men with children	12%	9%	9%	5%
Intact families	17%	22%	18%	14%
<u>Veteran Status</u> (of total mission population)				
Veterans (male)	13%	16%	19%	18%
Veterans (female)	1%	4%	4%	3%
Of veterans identified:				
Served in Korea	5%	-	-	-
Served in Vietnam	25%	-	-	-
Served in Persian Gulf	13%	-	-	-
Iraq or Afghanistan War	6%	-	-	-
<u>Homeless Status</u> (of total mission population)				
Not currently homeless	17%	-	-	-
Currently homeless	83%	-	-	-
Of currently homeless:				
Less than 3 months	31%	-	-	-
3 to 6 months	21%	-	-	-
6 months to 1 year	20%	-	-	-
More than 1 year	27%	-	-	-
Never before homeless	35%	37%	37%	33%
Homeless once previously	24%	25%	25%	24%
Homeless twice previously	17%	16%	16%	18%
Homeless three-plus times previously	24%	22%	22%	25%
<u>Other Information</u> (of total mission population)				
Struggles with mental illness	30%	-	-	-
Victim of physical violence in last 12 months	21%	15%	17%	18%
Prefer spiritual emphasis in services	80%	82%	83%	76%
Comes daily to the mission	82%	84%	80%	77%