



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Nicole Daniels

Office: 719.433.7711

Cell: 616.260.6097

ECONOMY ADDING TO RESCUE MISSION POPULATIONS

Men with children and intact families needing help on the rise

COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO. (Nov. 25, 2009) – Gospel rescue missions across North America are working harder than ever to offer help and hope to the growing population of men, women and children—hit hard by high unemployment rates and financial struggles—experiencing hunger and homelessness for the very first time, in addition to serving the chronically homeless and addicted. The Association of Gospel Rescue Missions’ (AGRM) 20th annual Snapshot Survey of the Homeless points to this increasing need and provides insights about who gospel rescue missions are serving.

“The numbers of people now seeking services from our member missions is beyond anything we’ve seen in the past,” said AGRM President John Ashmen. “Most of our missions tell us their beds are full every night, plus they are using all the common space in their facilities to accommodate the long lines of people showing up at their doors, pleading for a warm place to sleep.”

Not surprisingly with the current economy, the number of those who were in the missions during the survey period who had lost their government benefits (22 percent) was up seven percent, and the number of people who have never before been homeless (37 percent) was up three percent.

While women with children are still by far the largest family units in need (60 percent), their involvement at gospel rescue missions decreased by 6 percent. The number of men with children (9 percent) and intact families (18 percent) both increased four percent. This could indicate that

the economic situation is adding increased burdens to what would generally be considered more stable segments of the population, Ashmen said.

“The Fresno Rescue Mission and other nonprofit organizations in the community are experiencing grim statistics from the ‘working poor,’” said Larry Arce, CEO of Fresno Rescue Mission. “They are not necessarily homeless but are having a difficult time making their hard-earned dollar stretch out through the month. This has impacted every facet of our ability to give food, clothing and protective shelter.”

On the other side of the country, Chico Daniels, president/CEO of Mel Trotter Ministries in Grand Rapids, Mich., is seeing the deep impact of the downturn in the auto industry.

“Poverty is on the rise, and people are losing their homes because of job loss and downsizing,” Daniels says. “People are losing hope and that’s where gospel rescue missions come in—to restore hope to the hopeless.”

Last week, AGRM President Ashmen was in Boise, Idaho, and Fairfield, California, for the dedication of additional facilities at the cities’ rescue missions, thanks to donors’ and community leaders’ support. In both cases, the buildings will house women and children. Similar undertakings are in process in many cities across the continent.

“The challenges we are facing with serving more meals and providing more shelter are stretching us like never before,” said Dick McMillen, president of Philadelphia’s Sunday Breakfast Mission. “Thank God we just tripled the size of our kitchen/dining room. I don’t know how we could have handled the increased need otherwise.”

In other findings, the survey indicates that the overall age of those going to rescue missions is climbing. Those between 46 and 65 make up the highest age-group percentage (38 percent). In other words, the size of the baby boom generation seems to be reflected in the centers.

Additionally, the number of guests who had been homeless three or more times (22 percent) dropped three percent.

The Snapshot Survey of the Homeless, completed in October by 105 rescue missions across North America, looks at a point in time, but because it is a reoccurring survey looking at the same point in time every year, it provides excellent comparative figures and trending data.

Founded in 1913, the Colorado Springs-based Association of Gospel Rescue Missions (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.

Every year, faith-based ministries that are members of AGRM serve approximately 42 million meals, provide more than 15 million nights of lodging, distribute more than 27 million pieces of clothing, bandage the wounds of hundreds of abuse victims, and graduate 18,000-plus homeless men and women from addiction recovery programs into productive living. For more information, see www.agrm.org, or call (800) 4RESCUE.

###



Snapshot Survey Homeless Statistical Comparison

	<u>2009</u>	<u>2008</u>
Gender (of total mission population)		
Male	75%	74%
Female	25%	26%
Age Groups (of total mission population)		
Under 18	9%	12%
18–25	8%	9%
26–35	17%	18%
36–45	25%	26%
46–65	38%	31%
65+	3%	4%
Race/Ethnic Groups (of total mission population)		
Caucasian	49%	48%
African-American	36%	35%
Hispanic	9%	11%
Asian	1%	2%
Native American	5%	5%
Women/Children/Families (of family units identified)		
Couples	13%	15%
Women with children	60%	66%
Men with children	9%	5%
Intact families	18%	14%
Other Information		
Of total mission population:		
Veterans (male)	19%	18%
Veterans (female)	4%	3%
Of veterans identified:		
Served in Korea	6%	4%
Served in Vietnam	28%	33%
Served in Persian Gulf	18%	15%
No conflict/none identified	48%	48%
Of total mission population:		
Never before homeless	37%	33%
Homeless once previously	25%	24%
Homeless twice previously	16%	18%
Homeless three or more times previously	22%	25%
Of total mission population:		
Homeless less than one year	60%	60%
Resident of mission's city more than 6 months	70%	73%
Victim of physical violence in last 12 months	17%	18%
Lost government benefits in last 12 months	22%	15%
Prefer spiritual emphasis in services	83%	76%
Comes daily to (or resides in) the mission	80%	77%