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Contact: Nicole Daniels

Office: 719.266.8300

Cell: 616.260.6097

MANY AMERICAN FAMILIES ARE LIVING ON THE EDGE

Annual survey: Intact families seeking aid from rescue missions nationwide

Colorado Springs, Colo. (Nov. 29, 2010) — With 43.6 million Americans slipping into poverty, members of the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions (AGRM) are seeing an increasing number of people on the brink of homelessness, according to the 21st annual Snapshot Survey of the Homeless.

“The current economic environment has even people who are technically living above the poverty line struggling to pay for basic expenses,” said AGRM President John Ashmen.

The survey, completed in October by gospel rescue missions across North America, fills in some of the blanks about who is affected by the present financial crisis, and who these missions are serving. While the report only studies a point in time, because it is a reoccurring survey looking at the same point in time each year, it provides excellent comparative figures and trending data.

The Snapshot Survey highlights a significant shift as compared to recent years: More intact families are in need of assistance for the first time.

“Today, rescue missions are not just emergency shelters that also provide longer-term services for individuals, but more of an everyday solution for families,” Ashmen said. “Many people— 7 percent more than two years ago—come daily to our missions to eat meals and get hygiene products and clothing. And they often leave with a bag or box full of necessities for other family members.”

While those with women and children are still by far the most frequently served needy family units (57 percent of families), the number of intact families seeking aid grew by 8 percent

during the last two years to 22 percent. Nine percent of families at rescue missions are men with children, a number that holds steady from last year's survey.

"People who were once supplying our food pantry are now utilizing it," said Darryl Bartlett, president of Michigan's Holland Rescue Mission. "We've seen a 50 percent increase in food boxes distributed to our community."

The Snapshot Survey also reveals that the overall age of those seeking shelter at the rescue missions is trending upward. Individuals between age 46 and 65 make up the largest age group (40 percent of those served). These individuals are typically caught in the web of addiction and/or mental illness, and have seen a breakdown of family support. Many can be classified as chronically homeless.

In addition, 84 percent of respondents reported frequenting the mission daily. Some have not been able to successfully transition out of the organization's programming and into a job. Current economic conditions mean fewer or no employment options for rescue mission program graduates. Even Idaho's Boise Rescue Mission, known for its successful work-reentry program, has seen a dramatic drop in graduates.

"We're seeing about half as many transition out to the workforce this year," said Bill Roscoe, Boise Rescue Mission president. "Low-income apartments are available...jobs are not."

Every year, faith-based ministries that are members of the 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 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, see www.agrm.org, or call (800) 4RESCUE.

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Snapshot Survey Homeless Statistical Comparison

	<u>2010</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2008</u>
<u>Gender</u> (of total mission population)			
Male	75%	75%	74%
Female	25%	25%	26%
<u>Age Groups</u> (of total mission population)			
Under 18	9%	9%	12%
18–25	9%	8%	9%
26–35	15%	17%	18%
36–45	22%	25%	26%
46–65	40%	38%	31%
65+	4%	3%	4%
<u>Race/Ethnic Groups</u> (of total mission population)			
Caucasian	47%	49%	48%
African-American	36%	36%	35%
Hispanic	11%	9%	11%
Asian	1%	1%	2%
Native American	2%	5%	5%
<u>Women/Children/Families</u> (of family units identified)			
Couples	12%	13%	15%
Women with children	57%	60%	66%
Men with children	9%	9%	5%
Intact families	22%	18%	14%
<u>Other Information</u>			
Of total mission population:			
Veterans (male)	16%	19%	18%
Veterans (female)	4%	4%	3%
Of veterans identified:			
Served in Korea	3%	6%	4%
Served in Vietnam	26%	28%	33%
Served in Persian Gulf	16%	18%	15%
No conflict/none identified	55%	48%	48%
Of total mission population:			
Never before homeless	37%	37%	33%
Homeless once previously	25%	25%	24%
Homeless twice previously	16%	16%	18%
Homeless three-plus times previously	22%	22%	25%
Of total mission population:			
Homeless less than one year	59%	60%	60%
Resident of mission's city more than 6 months	71%	70%	73%
Victim of physical violence in last 12 months	15%	17%	18%
Lost government benefits in last 12 months	20%	22%	15%
Prefer spiritual emphasis in services	82%	83%	76%
Comes daily to the mission	84%	80%	77%