



## Number of Houston's Homeless Veterans Continues to Drop

**HOUSTON, Texas (Sept. 18, 2014) ----** Houston has housed more than 2,800 homeless veterans since January 2012, according to the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/ Harris County. This morning, City of Houston Mayor Annise D. Parker, Director and CEO of the Michael DeBakey VA Medical Center Adam Walmus, and Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/ Harris County President and CEO Marilyn Brown announced significant progress made in changing the path for Houston's homeless veterans. Addressing a large crowd at the CSH National Conference in Houston, the trio updated information surrounding one of the four primary goals of The Way Home campaign - to end veteran homelessness by 2015.

Since 2012, over 80% of the veterans housed in Houston were categorized as chronically homeless, meaning they have been on the street for at least a year or have had four episodes of homelessness over a three year period and have a disabling physical and/or mental condition including substance abuse. Extensive planning and collaboration between the City of Houston, the VA, Harris and Fort Bend Counties, the Housing Authorities and local Continuum of Care partners, has resulted in a dramatic decrease in the time it takes to house a homeless veteran. Depending on their circumstances, Houston-area veterans can now be housed as quickly as the same day they present. The goal is that every veteran's homelessness will be resolved as quickly as possible.

"The numbers speak for themselves," said Mayor Parker. "As a result of increased collaboration and a commitment to ending chronic veteran homelessness, Houston has been successful in getting homeless veterans off our streets. The job is not done, but we are proud of what we have been able to accomplish in Houston for the men and women who have served our country."

Any veteran who is still experiencing homelessness can report to Stand Down on October 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Latino Learning Center beginning at 7:00am to be assessed for housing.

Director Adam Walmus of Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center agreed saying, "What distinguishes Houston is our integrated approach that allows us to use community and VA-based resources to address medical, mental health and social needs of veterans in a collaborative way. This allows us to use an individualized approach that benefits each and every veteran. We are housing an extraordinary number of veterans and working to keep them housed."

Marilyn Brown, president and CEO of the Coalition for the Homeless, noted the progress made locally for all homeless veterans.

"Permanent housing, with supportive services, is the solution to homelessness. Since the 2012 launch of Houston's Continuum of Care, there has been unprecedented alignment and collaboration among the stakeholders addressing this challenge. We've now effectively created a single front door so that any homeless

# The Way Home

veteran in our community can receive services, regardless of their circumstances. Today, we have an opportunity to become a role model for other communities,” said Brown.

Brown went on to acknowledge Wells Fargo as a significant partner in the early efforts to end homelessness, introducing Jonathan Homeyer, Executive Vice President Commercial Banking, Wells Fargo.

“To speed the end of veteran homelessness, we are leveraging federal, regional, city and county resources, but we can’t do it without private or business support. I’d like to welcome Jonathan Homeyer, Executive Vice President Commercial Banking, Wells Fargo, and recognize Wells Fargo’s significant investment through its NeighborhoodLift<sup>SM</sup> program local initiatives funds. With your support, we can say today that we can help any homeless veteran in need of permanent housing in our community,” Brown said.

The Way Home is a blueprint to end chronic and veteran homelessness by 2015, to end family and youth homelessness by 2020, and to build a system in which no one has to be without housing for more than 30 days. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) named Houston as a priority community to help end homelessness. Learn more at <http://www.thewayhomehouston.org/>.

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