

The Way Home

Changing the Path for Houston's Homeless

For Immediate Release

HOUSTON RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR PERMANENTLY HOUSING 4,114 HOMELESS VETERANS

November 23, 2015 (Houston, Texas) – This Thanksgiving, **4,114 formerly homeless military veterans and their families in Houston will enjoy a safe, warm holiday in their own homes**, thanks to an effort under way since 2012. In recognition of these results, the National Alliance to End Homelessness recently honored Houston at its annual awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. for its work.

“[Houston's achievement](#) shows what we can accomplish when we have the resources and the determination to change lives for the better,” said Nan Roman, President and CEO of the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

More than 70 local governmental, business, faith, non-profit and charitable organizations are working together under [The Way Home](#) to build and manage a single system focused on a “Housing First” model to solve homelessness for veterans, chronics, youth and families. The first goal of the system was to end veteran homelessness in the region, which was publicly announced earlier this year by Houston Mayor Annise Parker, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julián Castro, Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert F. McDonald, Department of Labor Secretary Thomas E. Perez, and Interagency Council on Homelessness Executive Director Matthew Doherty. As a result of the local system's success, every homeless veteran that is encountered by a system partner has a permanent housing option available to them.

Back in Houston last week after the NAEH nod to Houston, a much more intimate celebration took place for the 35 partners of The Way Home specifically leading the veteran program success. The private,



low key event was jointly hosted by Coalition for the Homeless CEO Marilyn Brown, Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center CEO Adam Walmus, and Houston Housing Authority's Housing Voucher Program Vice President Mark Thiele. Thiele led the local team known as “[Housing Houston's Heroes](#)” - part of First Lady Michelle Obama's Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness.

Partners were invited to [comment on the success](#), even as the system moves to

closure on chronic homelessness and 2016 goals which will be focused on youth and family homelessness.

“The VA is committed to working with our state and local partners to assist veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless,” said Adam Walmus, Director of the Houston VA Medical Center. “No veteran should be without a place to call home.”

For video interviews and comments from the local celebration, visit: <https://youtu.be/HIVGWu3GyME>

Looking to the Future

Houston has been on the national radar over the past few years for the community’s efforts to comprehensively tackle homelessness through the unique partnership of The Way Home. The results show that tremendous progress has been made, even as the work continues. The 2015 Point-In-Time Homeless Count indicated that on a given night there are approximately 4,609 sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals in Houston, Harris County and Fort Bend County. **This number represents a nearly 50% decrease in overall homelessness since 2011.** The annual Count, conducted by the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County, provides agencies with hard data about the number and characteristics of the area’s homeless community on a given night. The group is gearing up for the next Count & Survey - slated for January 26, 2016 - and hopes to see further reduction.

Given the success of The Way Home over the past 4 years, the community was recently selected by HUD (along with one other community – Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Ohio) to pilot a youth-focused prevention initiative. More than 100 community stakeholders, local and national experts, and homeless youth from our community came together for a Youth Homelessness Community Conversation with the goal of creating a strategic plan to end youth homelessness in Houston, Harris County, and Fort Bend County by 2020. The collaboration brings The Way Home partners together with outside groups including: Harris County Child Protective Services; Juvenile Justice; Houston and other Independent School Districts; and agencies that provide housing and services to youth. These kinds of collaborations provide the community with the opportunity to lead the nation in cultivating best practices and creative solutions that work.

To learn more about The Way Home and Houston’s collaborative system to prevent and end homelessness, visit www.thewayhomehouston.org. Any veteran experiencing housing instability is encouraged to call the VA Homeless Veteran Hotline at 1-877-4AID-VET, or visit the McGovern VA Drop-in Center at 1418 Preston Street.

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The Way Home is the collaborative model to prevent and end homelessness in Houston, Harris County, and Fort Bend County. Learn more at www.thewayhomehouston.org.

Additional images available upon request.

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