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Los Angeles to Conduct Largest Homeless Count in the Nation

Thousands of volunteers and elected officials mobilize this week to assess Los Angeles's needs in addressing homelessness

Los Angeles, CA – An army of volunteers, community leaders and elected officials will descend on the streets, parks, highways, and alleys of Los Angeles County this week to conduct the largest, most comprehensive census or count of homeless people in the United States. The 2013 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count counts the number of homeless individuals and families in the region and identifies what resources and services are required to best serve them. In addition, the count helps assess the magnitude of homelessness in various communities and helps evaluate whether communities have made progress in their goals toward reducing and ultimately ending homelessness in Los Angeles.

Led by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), the biennial effort counts people without a permanent, habitable place to call home. The data collected is critical to assessing strategies and funding decisions by City and County policymakers seeking to successfully meet the needs of homeless individuals and families. For example, in 2011, the Homeless Count revealed that the number of female military veterans experiencing homelessness had increased by 54 percent, prompting the Los Angeles Veterans Affairs office to increase resources for those veterans.

The count, which is taken every two years by LAHSA, describes who in the Los Angeles area is homeless, where in the county they are located, and what type of changes have occurred in the homeless population over time. The count will cover nearly all of Los Angeles County, which spans more than 4,000 square miles. The Cities of Glendale, Pasadena, and Long Beach conduct their own homeless counts.

"Working together, we can make a difference in getting our most vulnerable citizens off the streets and into permanent places to live,” Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa said. “The 2013 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count is unquestionably the most important exercise we do to learn who are the men, women and children amongst us experiencing homelessness and that’s why I commend the many volunteers, communities and organizations from all over Los Angeles for stepping forward to join LAHSA in this effort.”

LAHSA’s 2011 count revealed a homeless population of 45,422 people, about 2,000 fewer than in 2009, with particular concentrations in downtown Los Angeles’s Skid Row and in South Los Angeles.

Volunteers are directed to specific census tracts for the count, and follow definitions of homelessness established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which include people sleeping in their vehicles, in parks, in alleys, or on the sidewalk. They also count people living in emergency shelters and in transitional housing. In addition, Institutions such as emergency rooms in
hospitals, jails/detention centers, and alcohol and drug treatment facilities will provide the number of individuals that are housed in their facilities that would otherwise be homeless on the streets or shelters.

The count will start on Tuesday, January 29 and finish on Thursday night, January 31.

"We all have a stake in preventing and ending homelessness. The thousands of volunteers from communities all over Los Angeles participating in the count over the next few days demonstrate that people care enough about this issue to make a tangible commitment to do something about it," said Michael Arnold, Executive Director of LAHSA. “The coordination of the count is a huge undertaking and we want to thank our partners in government, various philanthropic, business and community organizations, and the thousands of volunteers who help make these efforts successful.”

Over the next few weeks, LAHSA will use the raw data to create a detailed demographic survey that will be critical in planning and assigning resources for homeless programs and services. The goal is to reduce the homeless population and provide a better safety net for those who remain on the streets. “Homelessness, though a complex problem, can be successfully addressed," said Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chairman Mark Ridley-Thomas. "Measuring the scale and scope of the problem by obtaining an accurate count of people in every quarter of our County who have become homeless, is a crucial step toward providing meaningful solutions."

Given the vast size Los Angeles County, LAHSA is dividing the January count into eight (8) Service Planning Areas. The schedule is as follows:

- Tuesday, January 29 (Evening), San Gabriel Valley and East Los Angeles County
- Wednesday, January 30 (Evening), West Los Angeles and South Bay
- Thursday, January 31 (Morning), Antelope Valley
- Thursday, January 31 (Evening), San Fernando Valley/Santa Clarita Valley, Metro Los Angeles and South Los Angeles

Volunteers are still needed and there are many ways to help. For more information and to volunteer, please visit www.TheyCountWillYou.org.

LAHSA will be releasing an executive summary and full report of the 2013 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count later this year.

About the Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count:
The Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count is the nation’s largest count of homeless individuals and families, covering approximately 4,000 square miles. The 2011 Homeless Count took place throughout Los Angeles County from January 25 - 27, 2011 with the support of 4,000 volunteers. For more information about the 2013 Homeless Count or a copy of 2011 Homeless Count report, visit: www.theycountwillyou.org.

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) coordinates the biennial Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count for the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (LA CoC), as required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The LA CoC includes all of Los Angeles County, except the cities of Glendale, Pasadena and Long Beach.
About the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority:
The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) is a joint powers authority of the City and County of Los Angeles, created in 1993 to address homelessness in Los Angeles County. LAHSA is the lead agency in the HUD-funded Los Angeles Continuum of Care, and coordinates and manages over $70 million annually in federal, state, county and city funds for programs providing shelter, housing and services to men, women and children experiencing homelessness. For more information about LAHSA, visit: www.lahsa.org.

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