

# Central Arkansas Team Care for the Homeless (CATCH)

*The Central Arkansas "Continuum of Care"  
Made Up of Homeless Service Providers*

**\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, JULY 20, 2007\*\***

## **POINT-IN-TIME COUNT FINDS 1822 HOMELESS PEOPLE IN CENTRAL ARKANSAS ON ONE NIGHT (JANUARY 24, 2007)**

On the evening of January 24<sup>th</sup>, all of the homeless people living in Central Arkansas were counted, and many were surveyed. This "Point-In-Time Count" occurs every few years, providing an accurate picture of the breadth and nature of homelessness in the four counties of Central Arkansas (Pulaski, Prairie, Lonoke and Saline).

In total, 1822 homeless men, women and children were counted on that night. 649 were staying in Emergency Shelters, 538 were living in Transitional Housing Facilities, and 635 were unsheltered.

15% of the people living in shelters and transitional housing facilities (the "sheltered homeless") were members of families with children. 11% of the sheltered homeless were children. Some facilities provide shelter to women and children only (AR Cares, Women and Children First, Dorcas House), others provide shelter to unaccompanied children (Centers for Youth and Families, Lonoke County Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect), and one organization focuses on providing shelter to whole families—men, women *and* children (Our House).

24.4% of the sheltered homeless were considered "chronically homeless." The term "chronically homeless" describes an unaccompanied homeless individual (without children or spouse) with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more *or* has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. Some shelters and transitional housing facilities tend to serve a higher proportion of the chronically homeless (Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System, Compassion Center, Salvation Army, Union Rescue Mission, Mission Global Ministries, Lighthouse, Little Rock Community Mental Health and GYST House).

12% of the sheltered homeless were considered mentally ill. Little Rock Community Mental Health provides both shelter and transitional housing to the mentally ill. Gaines House also provides services only to the mentally ill.

63.4% of the sheltered homeless people had substance abuse problems. While most shelters and transitional housing facilities provide services to some residents with substance abuse issues, there are several organizations that run programs specifically dedicated to serving homeless substance abusers (Black Community Developers, GYST House, New Hope Living Center, Second Genesis, Sober Living, Union Rescue Mission Recovery Center, Chance Sobriety, Lighthouse, Recovery Centers of Arkansas, Serenity House and Serenity Park).

15% of the sheltered homeless were veterans. St. Francis House and the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System provide transitional housing to homeless veterans.

12.6% of the sheltered homeless were victims of domestic violence. Women and Children First, Dorcas House and Lonoke County Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect all provide services only to victims of domestic violence.

The Homeless Count and Survey is coordinated by members of CATCH—a membership group representing most of the homeless service providers in Central Arkansas. This year, the count was chaired by Georgia Mjartan, Executive Director of Our House, which operates an 80 bed shelter and a 40 bed transitional housing program as well as a free childcare center for homeless children and an adult education, workforce training center. Mjartan enlisted the help of every shelter and transitional housing facility in Central Arkansas. Each filled out a detailed survey enumerating and describing the residents of their facility on that night. The Department of Social Work at UALR has been heavily involved in the study for years as well. Dr. Carolyn Turturro led a team of graduate students into the shelters and soup kitchens to conduct in-depth surveys of homeless people. Among other things, the survey sought to understand the challenges homeless people face and the solutions they seek from the community at large. Quotes pulled from these surveys are attached to this release. A team of volunteer homeless guides and homeless service providers conducted the unsheltered count, venturing into homeless camps across the four counties and enumerating those served at soup kitchens. This effort was led by Sandra Wilson and the Arkansas Homeless Coalition.

The most recent Point-In-Time Count took place in 2004 and found 1429 homeless people in Central Arkansas, with 416 in emergency shelters, 729 in transitional housing facilities, and 284 unsheltered.

The count and the numbers reported here do not include the large numbers of individuals temporarily living with friends and family. Nor does the count include the homeless individuals and families living in permanent supportive housing—housing where people may live for an indefinite period of time that includes supportive services as needed.

Emergency shelter is defined as facilities with minimal admission criteria that admit homeless people on a short-term basis providing beds and meals. Transitional housing is temporary housing, which combined with supportive services enables homeless individuals and families to live as independently as possible and facilitates movement of families to permanent housing within twenty-four months.

Among the shelters and transitional housing facilities, there are a total of 1180 beds. (This *includes* 134 “overflow” beds.) On the night of the count, there were 1187 homeless people staying in the shelters and transitional housing facilities, and there were an additional 635 unsheltered homeless people. The homeless service system is over capacity, serving *beyond* our means to meet the need within our community.

Emergency shelter beds: 575 (441 year-round plus 134 overflow)  
Transitional housing beds: 605

Causes of homelessness include: lack of a job, lack of affordable housing, financial instability (working poor, unable to live on wage), low level of education, mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, recent release from corrections system, physical disability and health problems.

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Other members of the 2007 Central Arkansas Homeless Count Committee included: Doris Turner (City of Little Rock and President of CATCH), Veronica Goodloe (Little Rock Community Mental Health), Carolyn Turturro (UALR Department of Social Work), Alma Beck (UALR, Department of Social Work), Theresa Watson (City of Jacksonville), Sandra Wilson (Arkansas Supportive Housing Network), Jennifer Lambert and Les Hoelewyn (Arkansas Homeless Management Information System)

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