



Contact: Jayne Moraski, Acting Director, Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless & Hungry;
jayne@acha-fl.com; 352.372.2549

Media Advisory:

Annual count shows decrease in local homelessness

The Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless and Hungry counted 1,292 people in Gainesville without adequate housing, over the 24-hour period between January 26th and 27th, 2010. This represents a decrease from the last year's count. Of those without housing, 242 (20%) are under the age of 18. Changes in the Alachua County School Board's methodology for counting homeless children led to a 25% decrease in the overall homeless population count from the previous year.

The unsheltered population also decreased by 9%. Homeless advocates attribute this decrease to the eviction of Tent City residents and continued efforts to prevent the formation of large-scale homeless encampments. Such efforts have caused the unsheltered homeless population to scatter throughout the city and remain as well hidden as possible, making it difficult for surveyors to find and count all of them.

Key Findings:

- More than half (55%) are homeless because they lost their job and can't find work, up 20% from 2009. Only 6% are homeless because of substance abuse problems, down from 14% in 2009. Consistent with this information and with current economic conditions, 82% were unemployed, up 19% since 2008.
- Since 2003, the number of women without shelter has increased seven-fold with a 49% increase from last year.
- Men's violence against women caused the current episode of homelessness for 1 in 7 women, similar to last year's findings.
- For the fifth year in a row, the jail housed more homeless individuals than any single housing program.
- The most frequently cited needs were permanent housing, healthcare, dental care, shelter, transportation, and job training.
- 52% lived in Alachua County when they became homeless.
- Only 5% came to Alachua County specifically for shelters and/or services. Of these, 89% were disabled.
- 52% were homeless for the first time and 61% had been homeless for less than 1 year.

Since its 2003 inception, the annual survey has helped bring over 200 shelter beds and \$8 million in state and federal funds to the local homeless assistance network.



Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless and Hungry

...working **together** to end homelessness in our community...

Acting Coalition Director, Jayne Moraski, stressed there is still tremendous need in the community. The Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (Project GRACE) is a federally funded Recovery Act program that has helped approximately 100 families prevent homelessness since its inception in October 2009. But there are stringent program guidelines and these funds are only temporary. Therefore, long term affordable housing needs to remain at the forefront of local policy discussions. The county has more than 12,500 vacant housing units, though most of those units remain out of reach for people who live and work in the community.¹

Information from previous surveys is online at the Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless and Hungry's new website: <http://alachuahomeless.com/>.

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		2010	2009	2008	2007
	Persons housed in Local Homeless Housing Programs	365	336	352	278
Street (Unsheltered)	Persons in Streets, Encampments, Vehicles	575	628	465	325
	Incarcerated, Alachua County Jail	72	80	115	51
	Hospitals, Detox, CSU (Incomplete)	25	34	36	19
	Unsheltered (Street Count) SUBTOTAL:	672	742	616	395
	Homeless Schoolchildren, as reported by the School Board of Alachua County	255	546	413	279
	TOTAL HOMELESS POPULATION:	1,292	1,624	1,365	952

¹ 2007 American Community Survey, Alachua County, FL.

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?_event=Search&geo_id=&geoContext=&street=&county=Alachua&cityTown=Alachua&state=04000US12&zip=&lang=en&sse=on&pctxt=fph&pgsl=010 ; accessed 3/4/10.