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71 Communities Launch Participation in Zero: 2016 to End Veteran and Chronic Homelessness in the Next Two Years

January 28, 2015 -- This week, 71 communities from across the country launched their local participation in Zero: 2016, a national movement coordinated by the NYC non-profit [Community Solutions](#), to end veteran and chronic homelessness in the next two years. During the launch of Zero: 2016, volunteers in 49 participating partner communities are walking the streets in the dark to interview all local residents experiencing homelessness -- tallying each individual, but also identifying them by name and gathering key information on their histories and housing needs. These by-name lists will allow Zero: 2016 communities to quickly and efficiently connect individuals with the best housing option to fit their specific needs, setting communities on a path to end veteran homelessness by December 31, 2015 and chronic homelessness one year later.

Zero: 2016 is coordinated by Community Solutions, with the assistance of implementation partners at [CSH](#), [OrgCode](#) and the [Rapid Results Institute](#). The initiative, made possible by the support of major sponsors including Deutsche Bank, JP Morgan Chase, The Home Depot Foundation and Walker Dunlop, is a rigorous follow-on to Community Solutions' successful 100,000 Homes Campaign, in which 186 communities housed 105,000 chronically homeless Americans in under four years, including more than 31,000 veterans. The initiative is rooted in the belief that communities can house far more people with existing housing resources than they may realize by adopting best practices and using data to better organize local systems.

The federal government requires all communities to conduct an annual point-in-time count (PIT) of those experiencing homelessness during the last ten days of January. But while anonymous count data is important for tracking federal trends and allocating resources, communities need by-name information in order to reconnect with those they count on the streets and work with them to escape homelessness. That's why 49 of the [71 communities participating in Zero: 2016](#) will take this year's PIT counts a step further by creating and continuously updating by-name lists of all individuals experiencing homelessness.

The recently released results of the 2014 Homeless Point-in-Time Count showed that on a single night in January 2014, there were an estimated 85,000 chronically homeless individuals and just under 50,000 homeless veterans nationally -- 31,669 of these chronically homeless individuals and 16,218 of these homeless veterans live in communities participating in Zero: 2016. These numbers represent a 33 percent decrease in veteran homelessness and a 21 percent decrease in chronic homelessness nationally since the 2010 PIT Count. With actionable, person-specific

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data, updated during this year's PIT Count, local agencies will be able to connect people to appropriate housing options and available subsidies quickly, housing more people and ensuring that resources are being used as effectively as possible.

“By creating a constantly updated, by-name list of each person experiencing homelessness, Zero: 2016 communities are taking one of the most critical steps toward ending homelessness within the next two years,” said Zero: 2016 Director Beth Sandor. “It is no longer enough to count your homeless neighbors anonymously once a year. That practice is necessary, but not sufficient. To be sure you are housing the most vulnerable residents within your community, you need to know exactly who they are in real time and begin rapidly and methodically housing them one by one.”

Sandor also pointed to a growing collection of cost studies showing that it costs taxpayers far less to provide supportive housing to homeless individuals than to continue to fund their emergency service usage on the streets. In fact, she said, providing housing to veterans and individuals experiencing chronic homelessness could reduce taxpayer costs by as much as 40% through housing, health and employment approaches that eliminate costly and unnecessary hospitalizations, jail visits and shelter stays.

Over the next 3 months, local agencies and organizations will work closely with the Zero: 2016 team at Community Solutions to streamline interagency coordination and local housing systems, ensuring that all people experiencing homelessness are assessed and matched to available housing through a consistent, centralized and evidence-based process. This data will be used to develop clear targets for the total number of individuals that need to be housed each month in order to end and maintain an end to veteran and chronic homelessness in communities across the country.

***Community Solutions** is a national non-profit dedicated to helping communities solve the complex social problems facing their most vulnerable residents. The organization's work applies design thinking, quality improvement and a host of other cross-sector disciplines to issues like homelessness, unemployment, and public health. Zero: 2016 is a rigorous follow-on to the organization's successful 100,000 Homes Campaign designed to help a select group of communities end chronic and veteran homelessness in the next two years.*

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