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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: STUDY SHEDS LIGHT ON UNSHELTERED
HOMELESSNESS IN POLK COUNTY AND RAISES POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS**

The Unsheltered Des Moines Study is available to read at homewardiowa.org

January 17, 2023, DES MOINES, IA- Homeward this week released the Unsheltered Des Moines Study, a report conducted in partnership with Drake University detailing experiences of people who have lived unsheltered (on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation) in Polk County. The Unsheltered Des Moines Study examines why individuals face barriers to shelter and permanent housing in Greater Des Moines and provides a platform for the voices of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The complete study and a summary of the findings are now available on Homeward's website.

“We are grateful to Drake University and our community partners for their work in creating this crucial study,” said Angie Arthur, Homeward Executive Director. “It is so valuable to elevate the voices of people who have experienced unsheltered homelessness and pair their expertise with research and evidence-based best practices.”

Over a five-month period, the research team led by led by Drake Assistant Professors Elizabeth Talbert and Mathew Record surveyed 152 individuals with experience living outdoors in Polk County and conducted 37 in-depth interviews of the same population. Drake researchers utilized those first-hand accounts and extensive background research to propose recommendations to improve homeless services, create system-wide change, and ultimately reduce the number of Polk County residents living outdoors.

“Professor Record and I were pleased to work with talented Drake undergraduate students, local service providers, and numerous community members, capturing the lived experience of our neighbors experiencing homelessness,” Talbert said. “It is our sincere hope that our research and findings will positively affect policy and programs available within the Des Moines metro.”



Funding for the study came from Drake University (The Slay Fund for Social Justice and Fitzsimonds Faculty Fellowships), Wells Fargo, the City of Des Moines, Polk County, and Nationwide. The group is looking to continue to the spirit of collaboration as they process the results of the study and share findings with the community.

“Drake University is grateful to the Slay and Fitzsimonds families, whose generosity empowered Professors Talbert and Record and their students to partner with Homeward, generating greater understanding of this community-identified need through research,” said Ryan Arnold, Drake University’s director of community engagement. “We embrace our role as an anchor institution in central Iowa and are pleased to continue to partner with the organizations highlighted in this study.”

In the months to come, Homeward will help facilitate community meetings and strategic sessions, building a community-wide plan of action to address the barriers and recommendations from the Unsheltered Des Moines Study.

“The staff that support our unsheltered community members do incredible work every single day, but they can’t do this work alone,” Arthur said. “It will take investment from the entire Polk County community to ensure that one day, all of our neighbors have a safe place to call home.”

About Homeward

Homeward serves as Polk County’s homelessness planning organization, forging strategic partnerships toward ending homelessness. By distributing funding, resources, and data, Homeward seeks to create an efficient, effective homeless response system that meets all residents’ strengths and needs. We lead community-wide homelessness planning efforts to ensure that one day, everyone in Polk County will have a safe place to call home. For more information, visit <https://www.homewardiowa.org/>

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