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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: HOMEWARD TO CONDUCT WINTER COUNT OF
PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN POLK COUNTY**

The twice-yearly Point-in-Time Count will take place January 26-27

January 25, 2022, DES MOINES, IA- Homeward, Primary Health Care and outreach staff from area homeless service agencies will conduct the 2022 Winter Point-In-Time Count & Survey from noon on Wednesday Jan. 26 to noon on Thursday, Jan. 27. The annual Count will identify the number of both sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness across Polk County on a single night.

“The Count functions as a snapshot of homelessness in our community,” said Angie Arthur, Executive Director of Homeward. “This data is an important tool to assess how our homeless response system is performing and identify the needs of our neighbors experiencing homelessness.”

Results from the January 2022 Count will help Greater Des Moines homeless service agencies in learning where people are sleeping for continued outreach throughout the year, illuminate demographic and programmatic gaps, and provide additional information needed to end homelessness in Polk County. Data will also be reported to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) who requires Point-In-Time numbers to distribute federal homelessness funding. Homeward coordinates the Polk County federal funding each year, distributing \$4.6 million to homeless service partners providing permanent housing, outreach, and supportive services for people experiencing homelessness.

Over the course of 24 hours this week, teams comprised of outreach staff from homeless service organizations will conduct brief, conversational surveys with people staying outdoors in Des

Moines. Staff will offer housing assessment and support services to all individuals interviewed as well as provide a bag with supplies, gift cards and snacks. Populations counted via the survey include veterans, families, youth/young adults, and people experiencing chronic homelessness.

Due to the high rate of COVID-19 in the community, extra precautions will remain in place for this January's count including distancing and mask wearing. To reduce the number of individuals participating, no volunteers will assist in the count this year.

“Due to COVID-19, HUD didn't require communities to complete the count in 2021, Arthur said. “However, we decided to proceed with Point-in-Time as a community because we want to know how COVID has impacted homelessness and understand changing community needs in the wake of the pandemic.”

Data from Polk County's January Point-in-Time Count will be released later this spring.

Potential Visuals

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, no volunteers or guests will be able to participate in this year's count. However, media is welcome to visit the staff staging area for the Point-in-Time Count at Primary Health Care (1200 University Ave.) to collect interviews and visuals of outreach planning, gift bags, and general homelessness service operations. Media is also able to visit the Homeward office (505 5th Ave) for additional interviews or homelessness and affordable housing images.

About Homeward

Formerly known as the Polk County Continuum of Care, 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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