

CONTACT:

Angie Arthur, Homeward
aarthur@homewardiowa.org
515-991-6107
homewardiowa.org

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: HOMEWARD ANNOUNCES ANNUAL COUNT OF
PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN POLK COUNTY**

The January Point-in-Time Count revealed 644 individuals in shelters, transitional housing, and living outdoors, a 6% increase from 2022 numbers

April 12, 2023 **DES MOINES, IA-** Today, Homeward released the results of the 2023 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, a survey of individuals experiencing sheltered or unsheltered homelessness in Polk County on a single night. The 2023 count identified 644 people experiencing homelessness on January 25.

“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.”

Over the course of 24 hours this winter, outreach staff and volunteers from homeless service organizations conducted brief, conversational surveys with unsheltered residents in greater Des Moines (those living in a place not meant for human habitation, such as cars, camps, or on the street). Staff offered housing assessment, support services, and a bag with supplies, gift cards and snacks to all individuals interviewed. Emergency shelters and transitional housing programs also provided counts of their residents experiencing sheltered homelessness on the night of January 25, 2023.

“We’re very thankful to all the homeless service providers who partnered to support the Point-in-Time Count,” Arthur said. “It’s a good representation of how this community comes together to support our residents experiencing homelessness, improve systems, and increase resources.”

The 2023 PIT data was verified, de-duplicated, and analyzed by the [Institute for Community Alliances \(ICA\)](#), Homeward’s partner in maintaining data on homelessness programs in Polk County. ICA also helped document demographic data and identified subpopulations for residents experiencing homelessness.

Some highlights from the 2023 Point-in-Time Count include:

- This year's total PIT number of individuals experiencing homelessness was 644, which is up 6% from 2022 (606). The number of unsheltered individuals identified in January 2023 was 129, which is also an increase from 2022 (94).
- This year's numbers are almost identical to those from January 2020 which saw 646 individuals overall, 130 of them unsheltered. This comparison signals a return to pre-COVID service utilization in emergency shelter among populations who may have stayed away due to safety concerns in 2021 and 2022.
- 80% of unsheltered individuals reported their last permanent address in Polk County. 15% previously lived in another Iowa county. 5% of unsheltered individuals came from out of state.
- Youth homelessness and veteran homelessness continue to decrease due to coordinated efforts and additional resources to best serve those populations.
- The number of individuals reporting that they were fleeing domestic violence was the highest total in the last 5 years at 65.
- The number of individuals who self-reported dealing with substance use continues to increase year over year.
- As is often the case across the nation, Black residents are over-represented in the homelessness population. 25% of the 2023 PIT population identified as Black/African American compared to 7% of Polk County residents who are Black/African American.

Results from the January 2023 Count will help Greater Des Moines conduct homeless outreach throughout the year and illuminate demographic and programmatic gaps. Data is also reported to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) which requires Point-In-Time numbers to distribute federal homelessness funding. Homeward coordinates the Polk County federal funding each year, distributing \$4.9 million to homeless service partners providing permanent housing, outreach, and supportive services for people experiencing homelessness.

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/>

###