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## **Homeless Heroes: Project H3 VETS to House 90 Homeless Veterans**

*Workers, volunteers conduct survey, identify most vulnerable,  
find new trends in local homeless veteran population*

**PHOENIX (Nov 10, 2011) – As we pause this week to honor those who served our country, volunteers from across the Valley are doing more by shining a light on veterans who are now battling life on the streets. With the help of Project H3 VETS, more than 90 of the Valley’s most vulnerable homeless veterans will soon have a warm, safe place to call home, a major step towards ensuring no soldier is left behind. Project H3 VETS is a collaboration of the Arizona Coalition to End Homelessness, Phoenix VA Health Care System, Arizona Department of Veteran Services, the City of Phoenix and community based non-profits.** This week, more than 160 community volunteers and stakeholders took to the streets and shelters to identify homeless veterans with the most urgent needs and get an up-to-date and accurate snapshot of the current homeless veteran population.

The Valley survey will be used to identify homeless veterans most at risk. With the help of 90 federally funded Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers, the veterans most in need will begin housing placement. The vouchers are only a first step to a successful transition out of homelessness. Project H3 VETS is also looking for corporate community partners and generous individuals willing to help these homeless heroes leave the streets behind.

“These men and women wore the uniform in defense of our country and now they live on the streets,” said Joan Serviss, Executive Director of the Arizona Coalition to End Homelessness, which is overseeing the project.

“There are many homeless veterans with health issues so acute that, unless they are moved into housing and provided appropriate care immediately, they will die. Our goal is to identify and help those most in need, but the effort doesn’t stop with providing housing. We need our community’s ongoing help to make this project a long-term success.”

Results of the survey include:

Nearly 7 percent of the Valley’s homeless veterans served in Iraq or Afghanistan, up from 3.2 percent last year. Of the 216 veterans surveyed, 52 percent, have an acute health condition. The vast majority of all veterans surveyed, 88 percent, were honorably discharged and have been homeless, on average, 3.2 years.

Surveyors interviewed 60 veterans living on the street and 156 veterans living inside shelters or transitional housing programs. Veterans living on the streets were two times as likely to be medically vulnerable and experienced homelessness nearly 3 and ½ times longer than those living in shelters.

Volunteer survey teams spent three mornings combing Valley streets, alleys, and vacant lots. They surveyed shelters throughout the afternoons and evenings. The volunteers included several formerly homeless veterans.

Surveyors used a health assessment currently used by over 101 communities across the country as part of the 100,000 Homes Campaign, led by Community Solutions, a national non-profit organization. Project H3 VETS also aligns local efforts with the VA's national Homeless Veterans Outreach Campaign.

The surveys were done between 3:30 a.m. and 6 a.m. and in shelters in the afternoons of Nov.7, 8 and 9. Among the survey findings were:

#### **Age**

- 29 (13%) are 60 years or older.
- The oldest respondent was 77 years old and has lived on the streets for 36 years.
- The youngest respondent was 23 years old, an Iraq war veteran, and has been homeless for less than a year.
- 23 veterans have been homeless for more than 10 years.

#### **Violence**

- 54 (25%) were victims of a violent attack since becoming homeless.

#### **Duration**

- The average years homeless for the vulnerable veterans surveyed in the shelters is 3.39 years.
- The average years homeless for the vulnerable veterans surveyed on the streets is 7.86 years.

#### **Needs**

- 73 (34%) reported a dual diagnosis of mental illness and substance abuse.
- 142 (66%) reported a history of substance abuse.
- 95 (44%) reported signs or symptoms of mental illness.
- 164 (76%) reported at least one behavioral health issue.

#### **Health System Impacts**

- Estimated inpatient and ER costs combined total more than \$1.4 million a year.
- 120 ER visits were reported in the last three months, for a cost of \$151,800.
- 52% have VA healthcare. 32% surveyed are enrolled in AHCCCS. 20% have no health insurance.
- 33 (15%) veterans report suffering from a traumatic brain injury.
- 72 (33%) veterans suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

## **About Project H3 VETS**

Project H3 VETS is a collaborative effort of community leaders from the non-profit, governmental and business communities in the Greater Phoenix area striving to end veteran homelessness. Project H3 VETS builds on the success of Project H3: Home, Health, Hope, which provided permanent supportive housing to some of the most vulnerable homeless individuals and families in the community. Between Veterans Day and the Arizona Veteran StandDown on February 5, 2012, Project H3 VETS seeks to conduct approximately 1,200 surveys, the estimated number of homeless veterans living throughout Maricopa County, to identify their housing and service needs.

To learn more about Project H3 VETS, please visit <http://www.azceh.org/project-h3-vets>.

The Arizona Coalition to End Homelessness and Project H3 VETS are on Facebook and Twitter at:

[www.facebook.com/azceh](http://www.facebook.com/azceh)

[www.twitter.com/azceh](http://www.twitter.com/azceh)

[www.facebook.com/projecth3vets](http://www.facebook.com/projecth3vets)

[www.twitter.com/projecth3vets](http://www.twitter.com/projecth3vets)

To learn about the national efforts, visit [www.100khomes.org](http://www.100khomes.org) and [www.va.gov/HOMELESS/](http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/)

To connect a Veteran to care, please call 1-877-4AID-VET (424-3838)