

For Immediate Release

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HOMELESS INTACT FAMILIES ON THE RISE

National Survey Also Notes Increase in Physical Violence

(Fairfield, CA) Intact families—father, mother and children—make up nearly one quarter (24%) of the poor and homeless families currently seeking assistance across North America.

This is according to a national survey of 22,000 homeless conducted by the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions (AGRM). The figure is a significant increase from the 18% reported in 2006 and represents a trend of more couples and whole families coming to rescue missions for aid during the past four years.

In Fairfield, Mission Solano participated in the survey, where intact families made up 36% of the families seeking help.

“The reasons for homelessness are varied”, said Ron Marlette, Executive Director of Mission Solano. But some of the blame can go to the slow economy, the housing crunch and high energy cost,” said Marlette. “Some people are unable to keep up financially. And the economic factors affect more than just women with kids. We’re seeing a trend of more couples and intact families needing help.”

Nationally, people ages 46 to 65 were the largest portion of those surveyed (nearly one-third, or 31%), proportionately the same as 2006, but a considerable increase from 1997 (22%). People ages 36 to 45 (26%) and ages 18 to 25 (9%) declined in number from 2006.

At Mission Solano 19% of those responding fell in the 46- to 65-year-old group

“We’ve watched the homeless population steadily increase in age during the past 10 years, some of it possibly the result of welfare reforms in the 1990s,” Marlette said. “Younger homeless people who were receiving welfare have been moved toward work, and older recipients have exhausted their benefits and end up on the streets.”

According to Marlette, The national survey also shows that people on the streets in 2007 are likely to have become homeless in the past 12 months (61%), are experiencing homelessness for the first time (35%), and are more than a six-month resident of the community in which they receive services (72%).

In 2007, 46% of Mission Solano clients have been homeless less than one year. Most indicate that this is the first 24% or second 39% time they have experienced life on the streets.

Most indicate that they rely on Mission Solano for sustenance; 57% come to the mission daily for assistance. The religious nature of rescue missions is appreciated, as 88% said they preferred to receive services from an agency with a spiritual emphasis.

Veterans made up 21% of the men and women served. In Fairfield, an alarming 50% indicated they were veterans. Of vets both male and female, 7% served in Korea, 29% served in Vietnam and 11% took part in the Persian Gulf conflict. A racial breakdown revealed that 26% were Caucasian, 30% African-American, 34% Hispanic, 2% Native American and 5% Asian.

The 19th annual Snapshot Survey of the Homeless was conducted by the AGRM. The survey seeks to gain basic demographic information about people coming to rescue missions for assistance. The association represents roughly 300 member missions across North America, including Mission Solano, in Fairfield. .

Last year, AGRM missions along with Mission Solano, served more than 42 million meals, provided 15 million nights of lodging, distributed more than 27 million pieces of clothing and graduated 18,000 homeless men and women into productive living.

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For more information see the Mission Solano website at www.missionsolano.org, or call 707-422-1011.