



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GREATER KANSAS CITY BECOMES FIRST COMMUNITY IN MISSOURI OR KANSAS TO EFFECTIVELY END VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

Kansas City, MO – The mayors of Kansas City, Mo.; Kansas City, Kan.; and Independence, Mo. announced today that Jackson and Wyandotte Counties have effectively ended Veteran homelessness, recently confirmed by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the US. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The Greater Kansas City region becomes the 56th community nationwide (52 cities and three states), and the first in either Missouri or Kansas, to achieve this certification from USICH indicating that we have sufficient resources to provide housing to every homeless Veteran in Jackson and Wyandotte Counties. Mayor Sly James of KCMO, Mayor Pro Tem of KCMO Scott Wagner, Mayor Mark Holland of KCK and Mayor Eileen Weir of Independence led the announcement today of the success of this initiative, which began almost three years ago when the three mayors joined together to participate in the national Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness. They worked with more than 60 area agencies who are members of the Greater Kansas City Coalition to End Homelessness to meet this national challenge. Agencies and advocates have worked tirelessly to create a coordinated outreach and entry system to identify, assess, connect and permanently house Veterans experiencing homelessness. As a result of their efforts, 664 Veterans experiencing homelessness have been placed in permanent housing since January of 2015.

“The Greater Kansas City Coalition to End Homelessness has proven that collaboration works to end homelessness even across state lines,” said Matthew Doherty, Executive Director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. “We congratulate Mayor Holland, Mayor James, and Mayor Weir, and all the

people in the states of Kansas and Missouri, who didn't see a border as a barrier, but rather an opportunity to help more Veterans in need."

Mayor Sly James, a Veteran of the U. S. Marine Corps, was hosting a statewide gathering of mayors and unable to attend but sent a video message thanking the members of the Coalition for this "long, long labor of love" and reminding us that work still remains to end homelessness for everyone in Kansas City. "This work could not have been done and cannot be sustained without the substantial and continued investment from the VA and HUD," said Scott Wagner, Mayor Pro Tem of Kansas City, Mo., and First District Councilman At-Large. "We now have a road map for Kansas City to continue its cross-collaboration with our partner providers and federal, state and local entities, and to build upon this success to create an effective end to homelessness for everyone in our community."

"Because our veterans have sacrificed so much, it's critical that we do all we can to support them. This coordinated effort to end homelessness among our veterans has demonstrated that our metropolitan community does not have to surrender to the barriers before us—the state line, our many jurisdictions, and the silos we too often operate in," stated Mark Holland, Mayor of the City of Kansas City, KS and Mayor/CEO of the Unified Government (UG) of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, KS. "By meeting this challenge, we have proven that we can improve channels of communication among organizations and forged new partnerships for a greater good. To all who participated in this huge undertaking: Thank you! You have given hope to hundreds of veterans who have given so much."

"I am proud to be part of this successful effort as we continue to serve some our most vulnerable and valued citizens, our Veterans," Independence Mayor Eileen Weir said. "Because of our work together as a region, we now know that those homeless veterans who would like assistance have a network in place that will ensure they get it. This is a major step forward for the City of Independence and the Kansas City Region."

"We are pleased to confirm that the Greater Kansas City Coalition to End Homelessness . . . has effectively ended homelessness among Veterans," said the confirmation letter from USICH, HUD and the VA. "We are confident that the infrastructure and systems you have built will ensure that any Veteran experiencing homelessness in the region will get the support they need to quickly obtain a permanent home."

In nearly every category, homelessness in Jackson and Wyandotte Counties decreased slightly in the past year, according to results of the annual “Point in Time” count conducted by the Greater Kansas City Coalition to End Homelessness in January of 2017. The survey was conducted by hundreds of volunteers who went to shelters, camps and the streets to count unduplicated adults, youth and children who are homeless in our community.

To see the letter from the USICH, click here: www.hscgkc.org

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