

LOS ANGELES BUSINESS LEADERS TASK FORCE

HOME FOR GOOD

United Way of Greater Los Angeles & L.A. Area Chamber of Commerce

FOR RELEASE: MONDAY, JULY 25, 2011

FURTHER INFORMATION:

DAVID HAMLIN, WHPR, TASK FORCE COMMUNICATIONS (323) 730-0233 OR DAVID@WHPR.COM
DARCY COBB, DOTTED LINE COMMUNICATIONS, (310) 472-8600 OR DARCY@DOTTEDLINECOMM.COM
CHRISTINE MARGE, UNITED WAY / TASK FORCE: (213) 808-6527 OR CMARGE@UNITEDWAYLA.ORG
TAULENE KAGAN, UNITED WAY, (213) 808-6436 OR TKAGAN@UNITEDWAYLA.ORG
OR WWW.HOMEFORGOODLA.ORG

HOME FOR GOOD TASK FORCE CITES "WELCOME DEVELOPMENTS," MODEST HOUSING SHORTFALL

QUARTERLY REPORT CHARTS PROGRESS ON FIVE YEAR BLUEPRINT TO END HOMELESSNESS

LOS ANGELES, CA -- In the wake of receiving a national award for its innovative approach to ending chronic and veteran homelessness in greater Los Angeles, the L.A. Business Leaders Task Force on Homelessness has issued its second progress report. The report tracks advances on a wide variety of initiatives, measuring progress against benchmarks and deadlines; it also sets forth the Task Force's next steps in implementing its blueprint, *Home For Good*.

The Summer 2011 Task Force Report cites a number of systemic improvements in the region's approach to homelessness, including a 5-0 vote by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to align its policies and programs with *Home For Good*, a discussion among Federal officials and local cross-sector leaders on priorities for federal and local policy shifts, and significant local investments in strategies to end chronic and veteran homelessness. The Task Force also worked with Community Solutions (formerly Common Ground) to convene a "boot camp," in which the Veterans Administration, local Housing Authorities, County officials and housing providers together mapped a plan to reduce the number of days it takes homeless veterans to secure Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers from the current 168 day average to just 38 days. The Task Force will work with local leaders to implement that streamlined calendar.

"Six months into the implementation of *Home For Good*, we find a number of welcome developments which will create a far more rational and coordinated system," said Jerry Neuman, co-Chair of the Task Force and L.A. Area Chamber Board member. "The summit which we convened this Spring enabled local government and nonprofit leaders to work directly with senior Federal officials; together, they established federal and local priorities for the systems changes needed to accomplish our goals. The Federal officials have already communicated with us, reporting on shifts they are making in response to local concerns. The County Board's remarkable vote opens the door to additional permanent supportive housing development and a delivery system which focuses on permanent supportive housing.

Housing for homeless veterans and chronically homeless people lags slightly behind *Home For Good's* 2011 goals. The report charts 789 chronically homeless individuals housed, against a target of 1,700 for the year; it finds 361 veteran homeless housed against a target of 840.

"We're at 46% of our benchmark for chronic homeless housing in 2011 and 43% of housing for homeless veterans," said Renee White Fraser, PhD, co-Chair and United Way Board member. "Those numbers are lower than we would like, but we're quite optimistic about the near future because of the shifts we're seeing locally.

"Our report cites the Los Angeles Housing Department, which has 547 new permanent supportive housing units under construction. Skid Row Housing Trust and People Assisting The Homeless have shifted their priorities to focus more effectively on housing chronic and veteran homeless. Santa Monica has dedicated \$11 million to supportive housing and the local VA and Housing Authorities will dedicate a portion of new housing vouchers to chronically homeless veterans. The Downtown Women's Center dedicated 2 dozen units for chronically homeless women. We anticipate that those developments and others will get us to our 2011 goal," added Ms. Fraser.

The Home For Good report cites that the recently released regional Homeless Count, while a thorough process providing a snapshot of homelessness in our region, still fell short on two fronts. The Los Angeles Housing Services Authority (LAHSA) and the three other Continua of Care (Pasadena, Long Beach, and Glendale) completed full enumeration of homeless individuals in only 28 cities (with a representative sample conducted in other regions), falling 7 cities short of the 2011 Home For Good goal. The report also notes that a last-minute shift in the LAHSA Count methodology has not been clearly explained to the community. Home For Good urged the Continua of Care to maintain consistent methodology, and the shift in methodology, which also resulted in a significant retroactive change in the 2009 Count, has caused confusion among stakeholders who rely on these numbers to understand trends in homelessness.

"It is critical that we have an integrated, reliable method to find and house people with maximum efficiency," said Mr. Neuman. "LAHSA's alteration of its methodology fostered confusion, not clarity.

"At the same time, however, both LAHSA and the City are taking steps to strengthen and improve utilization of the Homeless Measurement Information System which enables homeless first responders to identify and track the services and outcomes for homeless individuals on an ongoing basis. That's a positive development."

Among other highlights in the Home For Good Task Force Summer report:

*Santa Monica Police Department is developing a training curriculum for all California police departments which will instruct law enforcement officers on engaging homeless and mentally ill individuals;

*86 leaders, including the Veterans Housing Foundation, the San Gabriel Valley Consortium on Homelessness, the L.A. Housing Partnership and the City of West Hollywood, have all signed on to *Home For Good*; West Hollywood's endorsement came from its Mayor, the entire City Council and the city's Housing Authority.

*The Veterans Administration and Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky launched Home Project 60 to house 60 homeless veterans and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has committed to contracting for housing location and case management services this summer.

The Summer 2011 Report was released just as the L.A. Business Leaders Task Force was honored by the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the nation's most prestigious organization addressing homeless issues. The Task Force won the NAEH Private Sector honor.

"The award is extremely gratifying, in no small measure because it validates the enormous amount of work which the members of the Task Force, volunteers one and all, have invested in this campaign," said Ms. Fraser. "More than anything else, it is an incentive for us to forge ahead; we're honored that they celebrated our work thus far, but we look forward to celebrating the completion of that work."

The Task Force, convened by the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce and United Way of Greater Los Angeles, has been at work since September, 2009. Composed of 23 business leaders recruited by both the L.A. Area Chamber and United Way L.A., the Task Force spent roughly 10 months studying Los Angeles homeless policies and systems. In preparing *Home For Good*, The Task Force met with local civic leaders, housing providers, social service agencies and national experts on homelessness; it sent a delegation to Washington, D.C. to examine funding sources and to learn from congressional and administrative leaders. It sent another delegation to Denver to evaluate that city's successful plan to reduce its chronic homeless population.

Home For Good is an action plan which contains 32 specific policy and administrative recommendations in the context of a 5 year time line; the plan creates deadlines and benchmarks against which progress will be measured. The blueprint divides the steps to end chronic and veteran homelessness into four categories: Align Goals, Collect & Share Data, Target & Reallocate Existing Resources, and Coordinate Permanent Supportive Housing Funding. The blueprint and substantial information about the Task Force and its work are available at www.homeforgoodla.org.