

FAITH WITH ITS SLEEVES ROLLED UP

Media Release

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Topeka Rescue Mission's Response to Rising Homelessness

Topeka, KS (May 31 2024) – Today City of Topeka released the results of the City of Topeka Point in Time Count (https://bit.ly/2024_PointInTime). The count was conducted on January 25, 2024, and included volunteers and staff from organizations that are part of the homeless task force.

A total of 537 individuals were counted. Of those counted, 276 persons were sheltered while 203 persons were unsheltered. The remaining 58 people were in transitional housing. In comparing 2024 to 2023, there was a 31 percent increase in individuals experiencing homelessness.

In response to these findings, TRM executive director, La Manda Broyles, states “We, at TRM, are not surprised by these findings. With the decreases of monies available during Covid such as SNAP benefits, and additional child tax credits, plus increases in the cost of rent and food, TRM has recognized an increase in the number of individuals and families seeking multiple types of services. These findings also correlate with the steady increase of needed assistance since 2020.” TRM acknowledges the importance of the annual Point in Time count and saw the need to provide additional quarterly data points that highlight a more comprehensive picture to educate our community on the reality for those experiencing homelessness.

TRM's data findings of particular concern include the number of people who were born in Topeka or averaged more than 15 years living in Topeka; the number of people stating they want to leave the streets and would go into a low barrier shelter or tiny home village; and the number of individuals living outside who have income. To-date, after speaking with 157 unduplicated individuals during TRM's quarterly surveys, our findings are as follows:

1. % of people either born in or having lived in Topeka for 15 years of more = 65%
2. % of people willing to access a low barrier shelter or tiny home village = 93%
3. % of people with income = 40% (based on two surveys)

We will conduct the 4th survey, resulting in a full year of surveys, in June of this year.

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Broyles states “TRM’s information, the Point in Time count, as well as the comprehensive findings of the Homelessness Innovation team needs to be considered in immediate and long-term next steps and utilized within a multi-sector coalition. “

TRM remains committed to working with community partners to provide preventative, reactive, and restorative support to those experiencing homelessness or at risk of falling into homelessness. We recognize the complexity of this situation and want to make sure that in addition to providing services, we never lose sight of the people we serve, the dignity they deserve, and the opportunities for assisting them to transform their lives. Broyles challenges the community to “come together, overcoming divisions, to seek understanding versus basing decision on assumptions, and be a lead example in attacking the barriers while being people centered.”

Topeka Rescue Mission Ministries is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization working in the Topeka Community and surrounding Shawnee County. TRM works with community partners to reach those in need by bringing help and hope through serving those experiencing homeless and feeding the hungry. To learn more, please visit trmonline.org or follow Topeka Rescue Mission Ministries on Facebook.