



Media Contact:

Maria Velasquez

Vice President, Community Relations & Communications

619-578-7560 mariav@sdhc.org

99 DAYS TO BUILD A TEAM OF 400 VOLUNTEERS AND 75 PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS TO PROVIDE CLOTHING, HEALTH SCREENINGS AND SERVICES FOR HOMELESS SAN DIEGANS

City Councilmembers pledge “the coats off their backs” for Project Homeless Connect

San Diego, CA—With only 99 days until Project Homeless Connect, the San Diego Housing Commission and its partners are beginning to assemble a team of 400 volunteers, 75 partner organizations and a donation drive to help the homeless. Taking the lead are San Diego City Councilmembers and fire and police officials, who have pledged “the coats off their backs” for this annual, one-day resource fair for homeless individuals and families.

During the last Project Homeless Connect, 660 homeless participants were served. Today, the Housing Commission and its partners [released a report](#) that provides a snapshot of these participants. The findings are based on 547 surveys.

“This report provides crucial information about our homeless community, such as: 84 percent of participants were single; 66 percent were male; 55 percent had no income; and 64 percent had mental health diagnoses,” said Richard C. Gentry, President & CEO of the San Diego Housing Commission. “This information underscores how desperately San Diego’s homeless community needs our help.”

At today’s news conference, held at City Hall, City Councilmembers and city officials committed to donating their gently used clothing, their time and their resources to help San Diego’s homeless community. The 6th Annual Project Homeless Connect will be held on January 11, 2012, in Golden Hall, at San Diego Concourse.

For the second year, the San Diego Housing Commission is the lead organizer for Project Homeless Connect, partnering with Family Health Centers of San Diego, St. Vincent de Paul Village, the Interfaith Shelter Network and other community organizations.

“Your donation can help someone dress for a job interview or just keep them warm to help somebody sleep through the night,” said Kevin Faulconer, San Diego City Council President Pro Tem, District 2, who donated a blazer and sweatshirts.

To volunteer, provide services or hold a donation drive, simply sign up at the Housing Commission’s website—www.sdhc.org.

“I would ask all San Diegans to participate in this event by making a contribution in any way that you can. One of those is to contribute your support, whether it’s through money, volunteering or contributing an item to Project Homeless Connect,” said Todd Gloria, San Diego City Councilmember,

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District 3, who donated a package of new socks and encouraged families, schools and businesses to organize their own drives.

The 5th Annual Project Homeless Connect was held on January 5, 2011. During the event, 240 volunteers cared for 660 homeless people, providing: 125 dental exams, 300 haircuts, 108 flu shots, legal aid, clothing and food.

“Most people haven’t had to go through something like being homeless,” said David Alvarez, San Diego City Councilmember, District 8, who actually donated a winter coat off his back. “I had a stint of being homeless, while not living on the streets, living with other family members. It’s a difficult time.”

The 6th Annual Project Homeless Connect will be held on Wednesday, January 11, 2012, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in Golden Hall, at San Diego Concourse, in downtown San Diego.

“While the January event may not seem like it’s that close, it is really just around the corner. Helping the homeless cannot be an afterthought, and we must be proactive,” said Sherri Lightner, San Diego City Councilmember, District 1, who donated a bag of women’s clothing.

Assistant Police Chief Boyd Long, whose officers see the hard life of living on the streets every day, donated one of his gently used police jackets, while Assistant Fire Chief Brian Fennesy’s children donated gently worn t-shirts and sweatshirts. Chief of Staff Jimmie Slack, of Council President Tony Young’s Office, also took a windbreaker off his back and pledged that Councilmember Young’s office would be 100 percent behind the effort.

Sister Patricia Cruise, President & CEO of Father’s Joe’s Villages, donated a child’s sleeping bag, commenting that children and their families are also living on the streets.

To replicate this year’s success, we need volunteers to escort the homeless through Golden Hall, staff the registration table and perform other services. Businesses and organizations are also urged to help provide the following critical support services:

Services Needed	
• Housing Referrals	• Legal Aid
• Medical Evaluations	• Substance Abuse Recovery Referrals
• Dental Screenings	• Food Service/Meals
• Mental Health Referrals	• Child Care
• Pastoral Care	• Haircuts
• Veterinary Care	• Job Information

We will be accepting donations on the day before the event, January 10, 2012, at Golden Hall. Please encourage your family, neighbors and colleagues to sponsor donation drives. Project Homeless Connect needs the following donated items:

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Donations Needed		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini Shampoos, Soaps, Toothpaste, other Toiletries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gently Used Shoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gently Used Blankets/Sleeping bags
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Toothbrushes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Socks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gently Used Luggage (roller bags)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gently Used Clothing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eyeglasses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Perishable Food

Attending the news conference were: Kevin Faulconer, San Diego City Council President Pro Tem, District 2; Todd Gloria, San Diego City Councilmember, District 3; David Alvarez, San Diego City Councilmember, District 8; Sherri Lightner, San Diego City Councilmember, District 1; Jimmie Slack, Chief of Staff, San Diego City Council President’s Office, District 4; Boyd Long, Assistant San Diego Police Chief; Brian Fennessy, Assistant San Diego Fire Chief; Sister Patricia Cruise, President & CEO of Father Joe’s Villages; and Nicole Beydler, of the California Association of Housing Authorities.

In recognition of “Housing America Month,” Beydler commended the San Diego Housing Commission and its partners for their efforts to address homelessness and presented an award to the agency.

The first Project Homeless Connect was held in 2004 by the San Francisco Department of Public Health, which created the event to better serve homeless residents. The first Project Homeless Connect in San Diego was held in the city’s winter shelter on December 8, 2005.

For more information, visit www.sdhc.org

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