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Board of Supervisors

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Board meets goal of housing homeless veterans

Six months ago, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors conducted a special study session on homelessness and vowed to find housing for all homeless military veterans in the county by the end of 2015.

A total of 401 veterans were identified as homeless and a County-led advisory group of community and private partners went to work on finding permanent housing for all of them by Dec. 31, 2015. By Thanksgiving, all 401 veterans had their housing issues solved, along with about 100 other homeless veterans who became homeless or moved into the county after the count.

"Our veterans made a commitment to all of us when they served our country," said James Ramos, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors. "We will stand by the commitment we've made to our veterans by finding them permanent housing. I'm proud to say we achieved and exceeded an important goal, but there is so much more work to be done on homelessness in our county."

Despite finding housing for approximately 500 homeless veterans, about 100 veterans who became homeless after the count or moved into the county during the past several months remain without shelter, demonstrating the challenge extends beyond the goal set and reached by the County.

"The transitory nature of homelessness means the numbers of homeless people in the county changes day to day," said Fifth District Supervisor Josie Gonzales, who serves as Chair of the Interagency Council on Homelessness. "But the model used to tackle the homeless veterans issue worked and will be applied to assist other sections of the county's homeless population."

"The County has developed an effective strategy to get homeless veterans off the streets and into permanent housing, and we will continue applying that strategy to help as many veterans as possible rebuild their lives and break out of the cycle of homelessness," Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford said.

The Board of Supervisors applied existing resources to find housing for all the homeless veterans, but this time, the focus changed on how the resources would be applied. For instance, some landlords were hesitant to rent to homeless veterans, but the Board of Supervisors tapped into one-time general fund resources to cover security deposits and other costs to help landlords feel more secure in leasing to them.

“There is no greater honor than to offer our veterans the assistance and support they deserve,” said Fourth District Supervisor Curt Hagman. “I am extremely proud to be part of the effort to end veteran homelessness in San Bernardino County. Our County's goal to house all of our veterans is ongoing, and I hope to find additional ways to assist those who have so valiantly served this great nation."

Said Board of Supervisors Vice Chairman Robert Lovingood: "I want to thank everyone who helped San Bernardino County achieve this impressive accomplishment. Every veteran deserves to receive the help they have earned and we're doing exactly that."

Philip Mangano, a national expert on homelessness and CEO of the American Round Table to Abolish Homelessness, has served as a key adviser and coordinator of the effort. The County’s advisory group included private partners such as the California Apartment Association, which helped communicate the need to landlords to address and remove impediments to housing.

Advisory group members also included the Housing Authority of San Bernardino County, the County offices of Community Development and Housing, Veterans Affairs, Behavioral Health, Homeless Services, Sheriff, Workforce Investment Board and Public Health.

LightHouse Social Service Centers, Loma Linda University Health, National CORE, Arrowhead United Way, Goodwill of Southern California, Inland Valley Hope Partners and the Faith Advisory Council participated in the advisory board.

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