

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Volunteers Needed for the annual Point-in-Time Count on Tuesday January 23rd, 2024

ALACHUA COUNTY, FL. (January 23rd, 2024) – The purpose of the Point-in-Time (PIT) survey is to collect information on sheltered and unsheltered members of the community on a single night. The Point-in-Time (PIT) Count is a collaborative effort that provides essential insights into the scale of homelessness, the demographic composition of the homeless population, and the effectiveness of various programs and initiatives designed to alleviate homelessness.

Homelessness in Alachua County has increased by 16 percent according to the latest Point in Time (PIT) Count held on January 23, 2023. The survey is led by United Way of North Central Florida's organization Keys to Home in its role as the Lead Agency for the FL-508 Continuum of Care. Keys to Home has brought together volunteers, service providers, local agencies, and concerned citizens to engage in a comprehensive assessment of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness.

The PIT survey can directly assist people experiencing homelessness as the data collected helps determine what resources and funding members of the community will receive. By counting both sheltered and unsheltered individuals, this event offers insight into the homeless situation and how Keys to Home can help communities identify trends and emerging challenges in their area. Keys to Home is a coalition including United Way of North Central Florida, key stakeholders, government agencies, nonprofits, and community leaders that develop targeted strategies to address the unique challenges faced by the homeless population. The PIT Count does not survey individuals or families that are doubled up, living with family and/or friends, or living in hotels or motels.

This past January, agency partners, outreach teams, concerned citizens, and volunteers with lived experience surveyed individuals across Alachua County experiencing homelessness. Volunteers distributed backpacks filled with essentials and gathered valuable information for the survey. The success of this year's count was made possible by the dedication of over 100 volunteers, six local organizations, and countless community members who donated their time, expertise, and resources.

United Way of North Central Florida collaborated with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development to ensure the quality of this year's data was as sound as possible. The insights garnered from the PIT Count will inform the ongoing efforts of the Keys to Home Continuum of Care to combat homelessness throughout Alachua County.

"We are so grateful for the support from our community members and the dedication of agency

partners who participated in this year's count," said Amber Miller, President and CEO of United Way of North Central Florida. "The Point in Time Count is not only about numbers; it's about compassion, solidarity, and our shared commitment to lifting individuals and families out of homelessness and providing them with the tools they need to reach stability."

The 2024 PIT count will be held on Tuesday January 23rd, 2024, and will occur throughout North Central Florida. Training sessions for volunteers interested in the Alachua County count will be held on January 9th, 2024, at the Alachua County Library District Downtown Headquarters located at 401 E University Avenue, 32601 in Gainesville, FL. Volunteers have the option of attending the 10:30AM to 11:30AM session, or the 5:30PM to 6:30PM session. To sign up for a training session, volunteers should visit the Keys to Home website:

<https://keystohome.org/pitcount/>

After attending one of the following training sessions, volunteers must sign up for a shift on Tuesday, January 23rd, 2024, to survey individuals experiencing homelessness. Volunteers have the option of three shifts: 7:00AM to 10:00AM, 10:00AM to 1:00PM, or 1:00PM to 4:00PM where they will frequent areas of homelessness and survey sheltered and unsheltered individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness in Alachua County. To sign up for a shift, visit the Keys to Home website: <https://keystohome.org/pitcount/>

United Way of North Central Florida positively impacts the health, education and financial stability of people living in North Central Florida and has been a staple of the community since 1957. In its role as Lead Agency for the FL-508 homeless Continuum of Care, Keys to Home, United Way of North Central Florida provides leadership, advocacy, support, standards, and funding to help end homelessness in the counties of Alachua, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy and Putnam. For more information visit KeysToHome.org.
