



PRESS RELEASE

Local News

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WOMEN WITH CHILDREN HIT HARDEST BY SLOW ECONOMY

Rescue mission assistance up dramatically nationwide, locally

Des Moines – High food prices, economic turmoil, and foreclosures are hitting single women with children harder than any other group, according to a national survey of 22,000 homeless people conducted last month by the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions (AGRM). Women with children made up 66 percent of the homeless families counted in the survey, a jump from 55 percent in 2007 and the highest figure recorded in the last eight years.

“Hope Ministries has seen a steady climb in the number of men, women and children seeking our services. This year we are providing a record number of meals and nights of shelter,” said Leon Negen, president/CEO of Hope Ministries in Des Moines.

Hope Ministries is a member of the AGRM and opened Hope Family Center in 2004 to address the growing need for long-term residential and life recovery services for homeless women and children in Iowa.

The 20th annual Snapshot Survey of the Homeless, completed in October at 137 rescue missions across North America, recorded more women than ever before, 26 percent of those responding, as compared to 24 percent in 2007. The total number of people taking the survey was up 11 percent from the previous year.

“In these tough economic times, homelessness may be becoming a suburban issue, not just a skid-row issue,” said John Ashmen, executive director of AGRM. He noted that recession-induced layoffs and bank foreclosures on rental properties—a traditional housing option for lower-income individuals—sometimes leave people homeless through no fault of their own. “With so much

additional need, now is the time for Americans to help. Even a small donation will mean a lot to organizations on the front lines of the economic downturn.”

Negen has seen that increased need at Hope Ministries.

“Last year Hope Ministries was providing a monthly average of 10,000 meals and 4,100 nights of shelter to homeless and hungry men, women and children. This year we are providing more than 11,000 meals and 4,700 nights of shelter each month,” Negen said. “Many individuals and families are displaced because of job or home losses and just need help getting back on their feet.”

AGRM Rescue Missions nationwide, and here in Iowa, are making every effort to help people keep their jobs and stay in their homes.

“In addition to providing shelter and recovery support, Hope Ministries’ meals program – providing three free meals every day to community members – is a form of homeless prevention,” said Negen. “Because families are able to come to us for free meals, they are able to avoid making the tough decision of whether to buy groceries or pay rent, feed their children or pay medical bills.”

Among the families coming to AGRM Rescue Missions for assistance nationwide, 66 percent were headed by women (55 percent in 2007), 15 percent were couples (16 percent), 14 percent intact families—man, woman and child/children (24 percent)—and 5 percent were single men with children.

Even with so many newly homeless people in need of help, the basic demographic makeup of Mission guests across the country did not change appreciably this year from 2007. Caucasians made up 46 percent of those served (47 percent in 2007), African-Americans 35 percent (36 percent), Hispanics 11 percent (10 percent), Asians 2 percent (1 percent) and Native Americans 5 percent (6 percent last year).

Those 46 to 65 years of age made up the largest segment of the sample (31 percent), followed by people 36 to 45 years (26 percent), 26 to 35 years (18 percent), children under age 18 (12 percent), 18 to 25 years (9 percent) and those older than 65 (4 percent). These figures were nearly identical to 2007.

Continuing a declining trend from previous surveys, 18 percent of the male respondents indicated that they were veterans, a drop from 21 percent in 2007. Of the veterans, 33 percent served in Vietnam, 15 percent in the Persian Gulf and 4 percent in Korea.

In general, people responding to the survey come to AGRM Missions daily for help (77 percent), and were residents of the community in which they received service (73 percent). Most had been homeless less than one year (60 percent), had never before been homeless (33 percent) or had been homeless only once previously (24 percent).

More than three-quarters (76 percent) of the sample prefer to receive assistance from an agency with a spiritual emphasis.

Hope Ministries has been serving the homeless and hungry in Iowa since 1915. Its facilities include Bethel Mission, a 108-bed emergency shelter for men; Door of Faith, a 102-bed long-term recovery center for men; and Hope Family Center, a long-term residential and life recovery center for homeless mothers and children. More information is available at www.hopeiowa.org

Founded in 1913, the Kansas City-based Association of Gospel Rescue Missions represents roughly 270 rescue missions in communities across North America. AGRM exists to proclaim the passion of Jesus toward the hungry, homeless, abused and addicted; and to accelerate quality and effectiveness in member missions. Last year, AGRM member ministries served more than 42 million meals, provided 15 million nights of lodging, distributed more than 27 million pieces of clothing and graduated 18,000 homeless men and women into productive living.

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For more information, see the AGRM website at www.agrm.org, or call 1-800-4RESCUE.

Snapshot Survey of the Homeless Statistical Comparison

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2007</u>
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	74%	76%
Female	26%	24%
<u>Age Groups*</u>		
Under 18	12%	12%
18–25	9%	9%
26–35	18%	17%
36–45	26%	26%
46–65	31%	31%
65+	4%	5%
<u>Race/Ethnic Groups*</u>		
Caucasian	46%	47%
African-American	35%	36%

Hispanic	11%	10%
Asian	2%	1%
Native American	5%	6%
<u>Women/Children/Families*</u>		
Couples	15%	16%
Women with children	66%	55%
Men with children	5%	5%
Intact families	14%	24%
<u>Other Information</u>		
Veterans – male	18%	21%
Veterans – female	3%	3%
Served in Korea	4%	5%
Served in Vietnam	33%	42%
Served in Persian Gulf	15%	14%
Homeless less than one year	60%	61%
Never before homeless	33%	35%
Homeless once previously	24%	25%
Homeless twice previously	18%	18%
Homeless 3+ times previously	25%	22%
More than 6-month resident	73%	72%
Victim of physical violence in last 12 months	18%	20%
Lost government benefits in last 12 months	15%	18%
Prefer spiritual emphasis in services	76%	80%
Comes to the mission daily for assistance	77%	76%
In long-term rehab – male	31%	35%
In long-term rehab – female	28%	35%

* Figures may not add up to 100% because of rounding