

2014 Manual



**NATIONAL
HOMELESS
PERSONS'
MEMORIAL DAY
Organizing Manual**

December 21, 2014

DECEMBER 21, 2014:

THE FIRST DAY OF WINTER, THE LONGEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR

People in your community will die without a home this year.

While we must try to prevent the loss of every life, we also need to recognize the reality of conditions that individuals experiencing homelessness face and plan to memorialize them on NATIONAL HOMELESS PERSONS' MEMORIAL DAY.

In 2013, over 180 cities representing 44 states and the District of Columbia participated in the 24th Annual National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day.

Let's make 2014 a year of increased awareness by organizing even more memorial events throughout the nation!

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Overview

Since 1990, the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) has sponsored [National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day](#) every year on the first day of winter, the longest night of the year, to bring attention to the tragedy of homelessness and to remember those who have died while living without a permanent home. Beginning in 2005, the National Health Care for the Homeless Council and the National Consumer Advisory Board joined NCH as co-sponsors of this meaningful event.

In an effort to maximize the impact of the day, we encourage local and statewide organizations to hold memorials for those who have died homeless in their communities. In 2013, over 150 cities, representing 40 states and the District of Columbia held memorial days on [December 21st](#) or around that date to honor the people who died homeless.

What You Can Do

1. Get involved with a memorial service in your city. A list of 2013 Memorial Day Events with contact information for local sponsors is posted at <http://nationalhomeless.org/about-us/projects/memorial-day/>.
2. Organize your own event to commemorate those who have died while living without a permanent home and raise awareness about the severity of homelessness.
3. Record the names of people who died without housing during the previous year in your community. There is no official tracking of homeless deaths in most areas, so work with people who are homeless, service providers, and public officials to compile a list as best as possible.

Resources

This manual should serve as a resource to assist you in your efforts. If you have any additional questions, please contact either/both:

Michael Stoops

National Coalition for the Homeless

(202) 462-4822 x234

mstoops@nationalhomeless.org

Brian Zralek

National Health Care for the Homeless Council

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bzralek@nhchc.org.

Planning Your Event

Invite other organizations to participate in planning the event. Local and statewide coalitions for the homeless, health care for the homeless projects, shelters, housing programs, service providers and outreach programs may all wish to participate. People who have experienced homelessness or who still have no homes should be incorporated into these events at every stage.

Make sure to tailor your local event to your own community, and try to think creatively about ways to honor the memory of those who have died and ways to raise awareness about homelessness. Past events have included:

- CANDLELIGHT VIGILS
- SILENT MARCHES
- GRAVESIDE SERVICES
- PLAYS AND PERFORMANCES
- SPECIAL RELIGIOUS SERVICES
- PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY EVENTS

All organizers are encouraged to work with their local health department and/or health care clinic/programs to identify the number of people who have died while homeless in the local area. Try to obtain the names and ages of each person. A name-reading can be a powerful component of your ceremony, as could a moment of silence for each of the deceased.

A full listing of the 2013 Memorial Day events is posted at <http://nationalhomeless.org/about-us/projects/memorial-day/>. Consult the list of 2013 Memorial Events for more ideas and examples.

If this will be your first time participating in **National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day**, remember that it is a personal event for your community and you have total freedom to honor the lives of those who passed away while experiencing homelessness in the manner that you see best fits. This guide is meant to give you ideas, not dictate the design of your event.

Working with your Local Government

In order to attract more attention to this year's Memorial Day, work with your local city council, mayor, state legislature, or governor. Encourage them to pass a proclamation or resolution that recognizes December 21st as [National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day](#) and describes homelessness as a continuing and serious issue that must be resolved. A sample resolution has been included in this manual. You are encouraged to modify it to best meet the needs of your community.

Working with the Media

Media coverage of homelessness usually reaches its peak at the beginning of winter and the holiday season. Make sure you publicize your event on social media and encourage local press to promote and cover your event. Each group should:

- Make and circulate a flyer that includes important information about your event such as time and place (see sample on page 8).
- Update your organizational and personal social media pages and website to promote the event.
- Write and submit a press release announcing your event to local media (see sample on page 11).
- Write and submit an article or letter-to-the-editor for your local newspaper drawing attention to your event and to the issue of homelessness in general (see sample on page 14).
- Invite local media to your event, if you feel comfortable doing so.

Media coverage is a great tool to bring attention to governmental policies, or lack thereof, which can be a contributing factor to the homelessness in your area. As governmental policies can also be part of the solution for homelessness, make sure to give credit where it is due. Materials regarding current policy issues are available at www.nationalhomeless.org and www.nhchc.org.

Working with Us

Please contact Michael Stoops (mstoops@nationalhomeless.org) and/or Brian Zralek (bzralek@nhchc.org) with the following information:

- A description of your event
- The number of homeless people who have died in your community
- Photographs following the event

Sample checklist of some, but not all, questions that you will need to answer:

- What other groups might want to get involved?
- Where do we want to hold the event?
- Is a permit required?
- How will we gather the names and other information of all the deceased?
- At what time should the event take place?
- What type of event(s) do we want to plan?
- How will we direct people to get more involved after the event?
- Will food and drink be served?
- What form of media coverage would be most effective?
- Who will promote the event?
- To whom will we promote the event?
- How do we establish a system to make it easier to host an event next year?

For Additional Homeless Memorial Day Resources:

Please visit <http://www.nhchc.org/resources/consumer/homeless-persons-memorial-day/> to see resources and useful links for [National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day](#).

A full listing of events held in 2013 is posted at <http://nationalhomeless.org/about-us/projects/memorial-day/>. The list of 2013 Memorial Events can help you find an event in your city or provide ideas for your future event.

Homeless Memorial Day



**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21ST
4:00 PM
IN FRONT OF THE STATE HOUSE
CONCORD, NH**

PLEASE JOIN US

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO REMEMBER THOSE WHO HAVE DIED FROM HOMELESSNESS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

For more information, contact:
Maggie Fogarty, American Friends Service Committee
(603) 224-2407
mfogarty@afsc.org

Please bring a candle for the vigil and a food item for the Friendly Kitchen

Sample Program - Outside Pages

Welcome to the Ninth Annual Homeless Persons' Memorial Day Service in Central Florida.

This service commemorates the lives of the homeless members of our community who died. Participants will join community groups, service providers and individuals in more than 175 cities across the United States who are holding their own services today.

This candlelight service is held on December 21st, the first day of winter and the longest night of the year. Our goal is to commemorate the lives of the mothers or fathers, sons or daughters who died on our streets or in our emergency shelters from illness or conditions directly related to their homelessness. In many cases, this service will be the only commemoration of their lives.

In Seminole, Orange and Osceola Counties, 33 people lost their lives while homeless. Advocates, friends, community leaders and service providers hope to bring attention to the need for more resources to provide affordable housing, emergency shelter and medical care for our most vulnerable citizens.

Thank you for attending this service. For more information about how you can help end homelessness, contact

Homeless Services Network
of Central Florida
www.hsncfl.org
(407) 893-0133

HOMELESS PERSONS' MEMORIAL DAY

December 21st
9:00 a.m.

**A ceremony to commemorate the
lives of the homeless members
of our community
who died this past year**

Sponsored by



Hosted by
First Presbyterian Church
106 E. Church Street
Orlando, FL 32801

Sample Program - Inside Pages

MEMORIAL SERVICE

Opening Prayer

Pastor Case Thorp
First Presbyterian Church of Orlando

Welcome

Cathy Jackson
Homeless Services Network of Central Florida

Proclamation from the City of Orlando

Alana Brenner
City Clerk

Eulogy

Robert Stuart
Commissioner, City of Orlando

Reading of the Names

Bakari Burns
Chairman of the Board, Homeless Services
Network

Jackie Dowd Remembers

George Crossley

Co-workers Remember

Steve "Rocky" Cook

Musical Selection/ Poetry

Closing Prayer (Candle Lighting)

Pastor Case Thorp
First Presbyterian Church

THOSE WE HONOR

*Adrian Acevedo
Connie Asbury
Teri Lee Brookshire
Albert Capps
William Phillip Capps
Steve "Rocky" Cook
George Crossley
Brenda Davis
David Dotterer
Jonathon Wayne Duck
James Evans
James Fisher
Arturo Miguel Garcia
Timothy Giedlin
Jay Girard
David Glenn
Lois Ann Gyermoti
Keith Hess (known as Stacey)
Heide Hewett
David Hills
"J.R."
Bernard King
Daniel Martin Jacobs (known as Chief)
Alan Martin
Joe Mitchell
Gerald Ramsey
Susan Roa
John Robicheaux
Michael Self
Phillip Tanner
Jerry L. Thomas
Sherry Tyner
Bradley Watson
John Handzlik
(known as Mohawk)
Wendell Wright
Heather Young*



HSN thanks the First Presbyterian Church of Orlando
for hosting this memorial service.

Sample News Release

ATTENTION LOCAL MEDIA
November 1, 2014

Contact: (Your Name)
(Local Group Name)

Philadelphians To Honor Homeless Persons Who Have Died, Call for an End to Homelessness

PHILADELPHIA, PA — Hundreds of Philadelphians will gather to remember those homeless and formerly homeless Philadelphians who died and call for an end to homelessness. Homeless Memorial Day, an annual event commemorated in over 150 cities and counties across the United States on the first day of winter, will also be a call to action to end homelessness in our city and our nation. Speakers will include well-known homeless advocate Sister Mary Scullion, Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell, as well as local religious leaders and several formerly homeless persons. Building on the theme of “Remember, Hope, and Heal,” the event will feature a ceremonial reading of the names of more than 85 persons, homeless and formerly homeless, who died in the past year. The event is open to the public.

WHO: Homeless advocates, service providers, homeless and formerly homeless persons, religious leader, concerned citizens, city representatives... and YOU.
WHAT: Homeless Memorial Day candlelight vigil, performances, and call to action
WHERE: LOVE Park at the corner of 15th Street & JFK Boulevard
WHEN: Saturday, December 21st, 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Advocates, service providers, homeless and formerly homeless people, religious leaders, and concerned citizens will honor the lives and dreams of homeless men and women who died this year in Philadelphia and will renew their commitment to end homelessness. More than 85 homeless and formerly homeless persons who lost their lives this year will be remembered.

Since 1990, the National Coalition for the Homeless has sponsored National Homeless Persons’ Memorial Day on the first day of winter to bring attention to the tragedy of homelessness and to remember our homeless citizens who have paid the ultimate price for our nation’s failure to address the issue.

Organizers of this year’s event are calling attention to this time of economic hardship for many Americans: “Unemployment and poverty are increasing, foreclosures continue at a record rate, and shelters and food pantries cannot meet the increased demand,” said Sister Mary Scullion, one of the speakers on Tuesday. “We use this occasion to call on all Philadelphians and all Americans to wake up and recommit ourselves to ending homelessness. While we seek economic solutions for our country, we cannot forget our most vulnerable citizens.”

More information and background information on National Homeless Persons’ Memorial Day are available at <http://www.nhchc.org/memorialday.html> and www.projecthome.org.

Sample Proclamation

New Hampshire

*State of New Hampshire
By His Excellency
John Lynch, Governor
A Proclamation*

**HOMELESS MEMORIAL DAY
DECEMBER 21, 2012**

WHEREAS, Citizens across New Hampshire will gather together on December 21, 2012 to honor and remember homeless individuals who have died in New Hampshire; and

WHEREAS, The first day of winter, the longest night of the year, is an appropriate time to reflect on the difficulties faced by those without a home or shelter; and

WHEREAS, Adequate housing is essential for healthy families and communities; and

WHEREAS, Difficult economic times and a shortage of both rental and single-family housing stock makes housing inaccessible to increasing numbers of New Hampshire residents, many of whom are working full-time; and

WHEREAS, Last year 4,825 people received shelter in a state funded emergency shelter and more than 17.5 percent were children; and

WHEREAS, On a cold winter night in January 2011, 2,438 people were in shelters, and last year the average length of stay in an emergency shelter was approximately 61 days; and

WHEREAS, Untold numbers of homeless families are living with relatives or friends;

WHEREAS, December 21, 2012 is the 22nd annual National Homeless Memorial Day;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOHN H. LYNCH, GOVERNOR of the State of New Hampshire, do hereby proclaim **DECEMBER 21, 2012** as **HOMELESS MEMORIAL DAY** in New Hampshire, and urge all citizens to work together to provide those in need in our community with access to a safe, warm place to stay.

Given this 21st day of December, in the year of Our Lord two thousand and twelve, and the independence of the United States of America,

Sample City/County Resolution

The City of Des Moines Resolution

Des Moines City Council Resolution Designating December 21st as National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day.

WHEREAS, the winter poses extreme hardship for unsheltered and inadequately housed low-income men, women and children in Des Moines; and

WHEREAS, the spirit of the holiday season of giving provides an opportunity for affirmation and renewal regarding the commitment to end homelessness; and

WHEREAS, December 21st has been designated National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day by the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Health Care for the Homeless Council and is so recognized by cities nationwide; and

WHEREAS, in this season of generosity and sharing, citizens of Des Moines are encouraged to commit themselves to promoting compassion and concern for all brothers and sisters, especially those who are poor and homeless; and

WHEREAS, in remembering those who have died on the streets, the cause of ending homelessness is kept urgent as is the city's/county's collective commitment to preventing such deaths in the future; now therefore

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DES MOINES, That we hereby declare December 21st as NATIONAL HOMELESS PERSONS' MEMORIAL DAY

in recognition of the people who have died homeless in and around Des Moines, and we hereby ask all citizens to take a moment of silence in remembrance and encourage our citizens to support all local efforts to eliminate homelessness in our community.

Sample Article

Saying Good-Bye: A Story about Loss in a Shelter

By: Barbara Anderson, director, Haven House Services, Jeffersonville, IN, and NCH Board Member

Charles "Cash" Brown. Cash was the first person to ever die in the shelter. He had pancreatic cancer and said that the shelter was his home and it was his right to stay there. At first we including his daughter tried to hospitalize him, but he refused, adamantly. The staff and residents cared for him, as they would a family member, and he died 10 minutes before the ambulance arrived, that forced him to go to the hospital via a court order his daughter finally won. His daughter called us two months after his cremation and asked that his ashes be buried under the Japanese Elm in the front of the shelter. There are now six trees there. A plaque, donated by a local memorial company, bears their names. She said her father felt at home there for the first time in a long time and it meant something to him. He was an African American Vietnam Veteran, played in several bands, and retired from the Jefferson County Public School System as a maintenance man. They visit him and us, both she and her brother.

Jonelle Akers was our oldest in age, at 75, and our oldest in time at the shelter. She was a paranoid schizophrenic who I found sitting in the rain in 2006. We fought endlessly with the mental health system to get her placed but they said she was "lucid" and couldn't help her. She played the piano beautifully, cussed like a sailor, and looked over the children as if they were her own, while her own would not even claim her body. She too is under the tree.

Mike Kahafer was a Vietnam Veteran as well. He had constant pain and was a great guy, when he wasn't clouded over by the pain medication. His smile was the most infectious thing; you had to smile when he did smile on those rare occasions. His eyes were brilliantly blue, and he was a quiet man who really just wanted to get along. He died from heart failure after taking too much of his medication. He did not commit suicide, but was just trying to kill the pain.

Tommy Rawlings was an older man who drove his moped around town like a religion. He was struck by a car and died after 10 days. Tommy was a friendly, optimistic man. He didn't let anything stop him and just loved to ride his moped. There is a video about him on Facebook saying he didn't get hugs as a child, and until he became homeless he didn't feel loved. Once he entered homelessness he found an abundance of

hugs. It was an odd statement because he felt more loved as a homeless man than a housed child.

“Cincinnati” John Anderson was an older man, a veteran, devoted to his deceased wife, Mary. They were nomadic in lifestyle and I really thought when Mary died two years ago that John would settle in and finally become housed because he had a substantial monthly income from veteran’s and social security. He did not. His nickname came from the travels at the first of the month to Cincinnati to get his money. He would come back around the third week of the month dead broke and stay for two weeks. The cycle was repeated monthly for as long as I have known him and that was about 25 years. He had dancing blue eyes and loved to spin a story. He never lived without his drink and would not even ask to come to shelter because he knew he couldn’t bring a drink. He would tease me and say, “Someday you are going to let it rip and we will party at the shelter all night long.”

Jean Ruel died at 57. She worked for me as a VISTA volunteer for 3 years when we first started the shelter. Once her VISTA time was up she worked for us until she felt she couldn’t work anymore. Her back and chronic pain was taking its toll on her body. That was 10 years ago, and since that time, a healthy robust woman became an emaciated shell of her former self. The pain medication she was taking became something she couldn’t control. She eventually became homeless herself and entered our shelter for the fourth and final time, three months ago. She thrived. It was almost like having the old Jean back. Her humor was contagious, her daughter had come with her, and Jean was devoted to her, who is now a young adult. Jean got sick right after Christmas, so her name wasn’t mentioned at the Memorial, but we lost her on Dec. 29, 2012. We would want her remembered.

“Old Nick” was an older gentleman who took care of the other street guys in Louisville. Being one of the oldest and longest to live on the streets, he knew them well and would mentor the guys. While he would look out for them, they would look out for him in return. When he died in his tent, it was after many had taken care of him. He had been called their “daddy”.

It was a tough year. You fight many battles to serve folks but this one is one you don’t win. When you bury someone in homelessness you find yourself feeling the loneliness as well. We don’t believe anyone should die without someone knowing or caring, each of our folks received a celebration of life.