



Responding to the Needs of the Community

## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### Counting to Care...Because We Care

*Homeless Census Awareness and Art Project Features Artwork by Homeless Children*

TAMPA, Fla. – (Tuesday, April 25, 2006) – Homeless children living in Hillsborough County are using their creative energies to bring the 2007 Homeless Census theme, “Counting to Care...Because We Care” to life. The artwork of 60 homeless children will be featured at the 2007 Homeless Census Awareness and Art Project show on Thursday, May 4, 2006 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the TECO building, 702 N. Franklin Street in Tampa. During the event, attendees will help select the top two art pieces, be able to meet the young artists and purchase artwork with proceeds helping fund the census process. This event is free and open to the public and is presented by the Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County and the Hillsborough County Public Schools’ Homeless Education and Literacy Project.

“Seeing homelessness through the eyes of children reminds us that everyone counts and deserves care,” said Rayme Nuckles, chief executive officer of the Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County. “And the art work the children have created speaks directly to our goal of counting every homeless man, woman and child to develop the community’s capacity to care for each one of them and meet their individual needs.”

The two winning art pieces, voted on by the community members who attend the May 4 event, will be featured on the t-shirt worn by the volunteer census takers during the January 27, 2007 census count. Every child who participated in the project will receive recognition and a certificate. The Hillsborough County Public Schools’ Homeless Education and Literacy Project

worked with children at Metropolitan Ministries and Haven Poe Runaway shelter to develop the art work.

“This project allows homeless children a unique opportunity to express their feelings,” said Kathy Wiggins, school social worker with for the Homeless Education and Literacy Project. “Their creative art work can teach us so much about their daily struggles and future dreams.”

The homeless census is conducted in Hillsborough County every two years. During the census, coalition staff, members and volunteers spread out across the County to shelters, meal sites, and homeless camps to talk to homeless people, gather data and provide them personal care items and other essentials they need.

“Not only do we ‘count’ each person, we take the time to talk to each person, if they are willing, to find out about their situation – how long they’ve been homeless, what contributed to their situation, their medical and mental health needs, are they employed or have any income,” said Nuckles. “It is this information that helps develop community-wide efforts to fill the gaps in current available services and expand the community’s capacity to help each homeless person.”

The 2007 Homeless Census Awareness and Art Project is being sponsored by local business and social service agencies to off-set the cost of conducting the census. Sponsors include: ACTS, DACCO, Mental Health Care, Inc., Project Return, Metropolitan Ministries, Salvation Army, Rick Scherer, PA, Smith & Associates Realtors, Tampa Community Health Center, Tampa Downtown Partnership, TECO, The Spring of Tampa Bay, University Area Community Development Corporation, Inc., and Volunteers of America. Additional sponsors are needed.

For more information about the 2007 Homeless Census Awareness and Art Project and/or to become a sponsor, contact the Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County at (813) 223-6115 or [info@homelessofhc.org](mailto:info@homelessofhc.org).

The Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County is a 501 (C) 3 organization responsible for establishing and maintaining concentrated strategic efforts to develop long-term constructive solutions that address the underlying causes of homelessness and meet the immediate needs of homeless people. Governed by coalition members, the Coalition promotes collaboration and coordination among social service providers, businesses, funding institutions, housing providers, state and federal agencies, faith-based communities and other supportive organizations and individuals to organize and deliver, without duplication, support services, emergency shelters, transitional housing and affordable housing to meet the specific needs of all homeless people. The Coalition also operates the UNITY Information Network that “virtually” links service providers in Hillsborough County. UNITY offers integrated referrals, creates a base of data to better understand homelessness to plan effective intervention, and shows “real-time” availability of services – all essential to securing funding to meet the level of need within the community. For more information visit [www.homelessofhc.org](http://www.homelessofhc.org).

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