



Responding to the Needs of the Community

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT:

Lesa Weikel, Community Relations Manager
813-223-6115 (office) or 727-421-0240 (cell)
Email: Lesa@homelessofhc.org

“Outreach for Life” Connects Homeless with Healthcare *Collaboration between social service, private and faith sectors*

TAMPA, Fla. – (Friday, July 6, 2007) – When you live on the streets, accessing healthcare services can be as big a challenge as finding a safe place to sleep. A new program, Outreach for Life, is working to make it easier for homeless people to connect with cost effective healthcare services and helping save taxpayers dollars.

The ‘official’ launch of the Outreach for Life program will be held on Tuesday, July 10, 2007 from 10 a.m. to Noon at Mental Health Care, 6220 N. Nebraska Ave. in Tampa. While “Outreach for Life” began in late January, it’s been operating in a ‘soft-launch’ capacity necessary to assess and streamline the process to better reach and help homeless people.

“Unfortunately, homeless people often lack the knowledge and resources to obtain proper medical care and treatment,” said Charles Bottom, CEO of Tampa Community Health Centers. “When a medical condition worsens and treatment is critical, they turn to our local emergency rooms. The Outreach for Life program helps homeless people obtain treatment before a condition becomes critical thus lessening the impact and cost on our emergency rooms.”

Through the Outreach for Life mobile medical van, homeless people receive a wellness exam, hypertension and diabetes screening, mental health screening, and access to health insurance including the Hillsborough County Health Plan, Medicaid and Medicare. When a

medical or mental health condition is identified, the individual is provided with a follow up appointment at either a Tampa Family Health Center and/or Mental Health Care's The Shop. The mobile medical van goes to locations where homeless people are living including shelters, service providers and meal locations.

The Outreach for Life program is a collaborative effort between the Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County, Tampa Community Health Center, Mental Health Care, Allegany Franciscan Ministry and WellCare.

“The need for this program is demonstrated by the more than 350 homeless people who already access the program's services,” Bottoms said. “And its success demonstrates the positive impact on people's lives when the private sector, faith community and social services work together to help our neighbors in need.”

EDITOR'S NOTE: Outreach for Life Event Schedule

10:00 a.m.	Comments by representatives from Tampa Community Health Center, Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County and WellCare
10:15 a.m.	Mobile Medical Van Ribbon Cutting
10:20 a.m.	Mobile Medical Van open to provide services for homeless people
Noon	Event ends

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.

###