

**OAK PARK  
HOMELESSNESS  
COALITION**

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**OAK PARK HOMELESSNESS COALITION LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS IN OAK PARK**

May 5, 2015, Chicago– The Oak Park Homelessness Coalition (OPHC), a multi-stakeholder group working to end homelessness in Oak Park, announced today that it has launched a campaign to educate residents, visitors and businesses about the issue of homelessness and the resources available for people in need of assistance.

The Oak Park Homelessness Coalition consists of governmental bodies, school districts, social service agencies, non-profits, the Community of Congregations, business associations and businesses. The group has met regularly in the past year to develop a baseline understanding of the local homelessness issue, goals and strategies to combat homelessness and tactics to create a resourceful and educational public-facing campaign. The Community Mental Health Board of Oak Park Township, Housing Forward (formerly West Suburban PADS), Prevail and a5 Inc. are spearheading the coalition.

In the past year, local service agencies have served well over 500 individuals at risk or suffering from homelessness. Oak Park schools (Districts 200 and 97) counted 173 students affected by homelessness in the 2013-2014 school year. Several social service agencies exist to serve these populations, but the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition consolidates, educates, and communicates these resources to individuals affected by homelessness, and the general public. “Working together, the Coalition has developed an understanding of the depth of the issue, and through our campaign we aim to raise awareness of how we can work together as a community to help those in need,” says Lisa DeVivo, Executive Director, the Community Mental Health Board of Oak Park Township. “We have already begun working together to create a continuum of care and a plan with the goal to end homelessness in Oak Park”.

The week of May 18, the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition will debut its public-facing campaign. Through a headline “I always wanted to help but didn’t know how”, the poster series directs individuals to local resources that can assist, including Housing Forward and Prevail. “Too many individuals and families are affected by homelessness, or the threat of homelessness,” says Lynda Schueler, Executive Director at Housing Forward (formerly West Suburban PADS). “At any point, someone you know could be impacted by a lack of housing, and could be sleeping on someone’s

couch or living in a shelter or a vehicle. Housing Forward and the OPHC are working closely together to help all who need it.”

Chicago-based branding and interactive firm a5 Inc. produced posters, web content and a microsite to create a platform for the coalition and its mission. The OPHC also plans to use social media and email as a vehicle for sharing the campaign.

To find out more about the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition, visit the microsite at [www.endhomelessnessoakpark.com](http://www.endhomelessnessoakpark.com)

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