



*For immediate release*

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## **One Year Anniversary for Homeless Day Resource Center** *Rescue Mission and Homeless and Hunger Coalition Report Progress*

“We wanted a place where the homeless would be off the streets and encouraged to work on the problems that caused their homelessness,” said Rev. Fox, Executive Director for the Mission.

The Mission lacked space to offer daytime services and faced criticism from the city that it wasn’t doing more to keep the homeless off the streets during the day. In September 2005, it successfully completed renovations to one of its buildings and opened the doors to a safe, clean center for community resources for the homeless.

The Mission had teamed up with the Homeless and Hunger Coalition of Northwest Florida to coordinate service providers at the center.

“Our clients often have no transportation or money to pay for the trolley service. A one-stop center for these resources helped to speed recovery since they would not have to spend so much time walking from agency to agency seeking help.” said Fox.

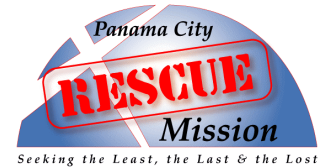
Those resources include an advocate to help them navigate the social-services world, representatives from Life Management Center and Workforce Center, a lawyer offering free legal aid, and Internet access. The Mission offered lockers so the homeless would have a safe storage place for what few belongings they carried with them. A play center was added for the children with the help of the Early Learning Coalition.

“The resources are here, so there’s no excuse for clients to not take advantage of them,” said Fox. “We let them know that help is only available to those that try to help themselves.” One year later, the Mission continues to see improvement.

In its first year of operation, the Homeless Day Resource Center has 11,455 contacts with people for direct services or information and referral. At least 400 individuals have been helped with employment and 75 with affordable housing.

The next phase of the progress will be the building of a courtyard on the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Allen Avenue. Plans are complete with privacy walls in a Spanish Mission architectural style. Funds are still needed to complete this project. Please call 769-0783 for more information.

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## *Mission Preparing to Meet Homeless Need this Holiday Season*

### *Rescue Mission Releases Results from Snapshot Survey*

The Mission recently conducted a survey of its homeless clients and found a reported 47 percent have never been homeless before (in 2004, it was 36 percent). More than two-thirds (76 percent) have been on the streets for less than a year (in 2004 it was 69 percent).

"These numbers are showing there are more new homeless than before," said Michael Martin, Director of Operations. "This could be due to a lack of affordable housing and more homeless hurricane evacuees living in our city."

The Mission reports that its clients are increasingly younger, with 29 percent of Mission residents age 35 and younger, which is up from 21 percent in 2004.

### *Mission Seeking Help for Holiday Season*

It's now Fall and that means one thing for the Panama City Rescue Mission. The 150-bed shelter and recovery program needs food. In fiscal year 2005-2006 ending September 30<sup>th</sup>, the Mission provided shelter beds to 37,175 clients and served 101,220 meals.

"Each fall we see increased numbers of homeless people at our doors seeking help and the holidays can wreak havoc in the lives of people already living on the edge of poverty," said Amanda Bawn, Development Director. "Any minor crisis can push a needy family into homelessness."

"Many of our clients have to choose between paying for rent or buying food. We serve nearly 300 hot meals each day to our residents and those in need in the surrounding community," said Bawn. "We have an increasing number of women with children and the elderly to feed. "

All those hungry people to feed means the Mission goes through many #10 sized canned vegetables and frozen meats. An empty pantry attests to the need; it is normally overflowing with canned foods, but now shelves sit bare and empty.

You may drop off non-perishable food items, preferably in bulk sizes such as #10 size cans, at the Mission on Allen Avenue or at **area Winn-Dixie Stores who have partnered to help with the need.**

The Mission can also accept freshly prepared food, so remember the shelter after your holiday dinners and drop off the leftovers at 609 Allen Avenue. And, when you're shopping for your holiday turkeys, you can purchase an extra one and the Mission will make sure they are fed to people in need.