



Minnesota
Coalition *for the*
Homeless

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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37th Annual Homeless Memorial Service honors 325 people: We march together, mourn at a distance

Minneapolis -- On Thursday, December 16, community members will gather for the 37th annual Minnesota Homeless Memorial. The tradition serves as a vigil for individuals who lost their lives while homeless. People who were formerly homeless and advocates/close friends to the unhoused community will also be honored. This year, the list includes 325 names.

That total is comprised of 201 people who were homeless, 110 people who were formerly homeless, and 14 advocates. In 2021, the average age of death for those reported to be homeless was 41, compared to an average age of 51 for people reported to be formerly homeless. About 17 percent of the deaths were of people identified as Indigenous.

This year's list of names shows a significant increase over last year. That's in part because about 60 names of people who passed away in 2020 weren't available in time for last year's memorial. They were added to this year's list so they, too, could be honored.

But that doesn't entirely erase the fact that our community is losing an alarming number of homeless or formerly homeless people every year. In 2019, 103 names of unhoused individuals were collected, which was the highest number reported since at least 2006.

"As we come together to honor the memory of those, we lost in 2021, we are reminded that it is our shared responsibility to end homelessness in Minnesota," says Rhonda Otteson, Executive Director of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless. "Tonight, 20,000 people will experience homelessness. We know that shelter saves lives and housing ends homelessness. Together, we can achieve a just and equitable future where home is a reality for every individual and family in Minnesota."

It's been a difficult two years for gatherings of any kind. Last year's memorial had to be entirely virtual in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This year will feature an in-person march starting at

Plymouth Congregational Church in Minneapolis, followed by a virtual service of remembrance at Simpson Housing Services' official Facebook page. The community meal, which has been an annual tradition at the memorial, has been suspended this year in the interest of everyone's health and safety.

"In addition to remembrance and celebration – this evening is a stark reminder of the very real cost of housing instability, in the lost years of life, of relationships and of richness in our community," Simpson Executive Director Steve Horsfield says. "We are grateful that we are able to march together in solidarity and gather safely for the Homeless Memorial Virtual Service."

Event details:

What: 37th Annual Minnesota Homeless Memorial March and Service

When: Thursday, December 16

In-person Homeless Memorial March begins at 4:00 p.m. Route begins and ends at Plymouth Congregational Church (1900 Nicollet Ave. S, Minneapolis) and loops through Loring Park.

Virtual Memorial Service begins at 7:00 p.m. on Facebook Live (www.facebook.com/simpsonhousing/)

We are pleased to welcome at the virtual service: Simpson Housing Services Executive Director Steve Horsfield, Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless Executive Director Rhonda Otteson, American Indian Community Development Corporation CEO Mike Goze, and Lead Minister of Plymouth Congregational Church Rev. Dr. DeWayne Davis.

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