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GRACE CENTERS OF HOPE TO HOLD 'SLEEP OUT AGAINST HOMELESSNESS,' NOV. 19

PONTIAC, Mich., Nov. XX, 2010 – Grace Centers of Hope, one of southeast Michigan’s oldest and largest homeless shelters, is holding a ‘Sleep Out Against Homelessness’ event on Friday, Nov. 19. The Sleep Out, which begins at 8 p.m., is part of Grace Center of Hope’s efforts during National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week to address the plight of the homeless in this region. The event will be held on the grounds of Grace Gospel Fellowship Church, 210 North Perry in Pontiac.

“With winter approaching, it is extremely important for people in our communities to recognize the hardships that the homeless endure,” said Grace Centers of Hope CEO, Pastor Kent W. Clark. “It is difficult to truly comprehend their emotional trials and tribulations, but to try to put ourselves in their physical setting is a good start.”

Starting at 8 p.m., groups of high school and college students, church groups, families and individuals will gather together to construct make-shift shelters from cardboard boxes and participate in a homelessness simulation activity. The homeless simulation exercises will provide participants with the opportunity to discover what kind of help they would need if they ever became homeless. In addition, each person will be assigned a particular label (i.e. mentally ill, domestic violence victim, etc.) and will join others similarly labeled.

“Homelessness occurs for a variety of reasons, such as mental illness, domestic violence and substance abuse,” said Clark. “Because of that, Grace Centers of Hope has included in this event other service providers throughout the community who work with particular demographics of the homeless population.”

Representatives from various community agencies will give brief presentations and discuss how they assist the homeless. In addition to Grace Centers of Hope, agencies taking part in the Sleep Out will be Abigayle Ministries, H.A.V.E.N., Easter Seals, Community Housing Network, Inc., CNS (Community Network Services) and Common Ground Sanctuary.

A unique exhibit of old doors painted by volunteer artists to visually represent the harsh realities of living on the streets will be on display during the event. Sleep Out participants also will listen to victory stories from former Grace Centers of Hope homeless clients, enjoy music from local bands and hold a candlelight and prayer vigil. A donut breakfast will be provided in the morning.

“Even if people cannot participate in our entire Sleep Out event, we invite the community to join us for this wonderful artistic display of doors and educational activities that will occur before 11 p.m.” added Clark.

Prior to the Sleep Out, Art Van will present Grace Centers of Hope with a \$25,000 check for receiving the most votes online in the Art Van Million Dollar Charity Challenge. The grant will be used to support the organization’s general operating funds, including the 30-day Emergency Food & Shelter Program, the One-Year Life Skills Program and the Aftercare Program.

For more information or pre-registration for ‘Sleep Out Against Homelessness,’ visit www.gracecentersofhope.org or call (248) 334-2187. Pledge Sheets are available for those interested.

About Grace Centers of Hope

Giving hope to the helpless since 1942, Grace Centers of Hope is one of southeast Michigan’s oldest and largest service provider for the homeless. Today, Grace Centers of Hope is considered one of the leading faith-based organizations in Southeastern Michigan, confronting issues of homelessness, addiction, poverty, abuse and spiritual emptiness on a daily basis. On any given night, Grace Centers of Hope provides transitional and emergency shelter to 150-200 men, women and children, in addition to serving more than 127,000 meals each year. Grace’s \$4.4 million yearly budget is maintained solely through corporate and private donors, exclusive of any government assistance.

For more information, or to make a donation, visit www.gracecentersofhope.org.

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