



MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Providing Shelter for the Homeless as the Temperature Drops

Cold Weather Shelter Program features unique collaboration between nonprofits, churches, and the City of Austin Office of Emergency Management

Austin, Texas — Front Steps, in collaboration with the Salvation Army, the City of Austin, Capital Metro, American Red Cross, and participating Cold Weather Shelter churches, coordinates a winter weather homeless shelter plan that provides a place to sleep for every person seeking a warm and safe shelter on freezing nights. The Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH) is operating at its full capacity of 215 men throughout the winter months, regardless of the temperature.

The Cold Weather Shelter plan is implemented when Austin's predicted overnight low is expected to be 35 degrees and wet or 32 degrees and dry. Coordinating with the City of Austin's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM), the Front Steps' Cold Weather Shelter Coordinator makes a decision by 1:00 pm whether to activate faith-based facilities for that night. Local churches generously open their doors and provide temporary overnight shelter on these nights with Capitol Metro transporting those men in need of shelter from the ARCH to participating churches, while the women walk to the downtown churches that provide shelter for them.

If the weather conditions call for the implementation of the plan, HSEM provides notification to and coordination among the other agencies. When the ARCH, Salvation Army, and the designated churches fill to capacity, HSEM also notifies the City's Parks and Recreation Department to prepare a city recreational facility to be used as an additional shelter location.

Currently, seven churches host men, and two churches host women. The volunteer-staffed shelters offer a warm place to sleep, a hot meal, and a welcoming environment to homeless men and women. Clients can call the Cold Weather Shelter hotline (305-ICEE) daily during winter months for updates on shelter availability.

Front Steps is seeking donations from the community to assist with keeping our homeless neighbors warm throughout the winter months. Your financial support will allow Front Steps to continue and expand our programs and services to the homeless in our community with a special focus on restoring hope. Contributions can be made online at www.frontsteps.org. In-kind donations, such as socks, sleeping bags, blankets, and adult coats, are also appreciated. In the last month, Front Steps has already distributed more than 650 blankets to the men and women we serve. For our complete Wish List, please visit <http://www.frontsteps.org/how-to-help/donate/wish-list.html>. When dropping off donations at the ARCH, please contact Dawn Perkins in advance at 512-305-4174 to get specific drop-off instructions. We prefer that all donations come through our parking garage entrance.

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ABOUT FRONT STEPS:

Front Steps is a nonprofit organization that manages the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH), the Central Texas Recuperative Care Program, and the Keep Austin Housed AmeriCorps Program, as well as transitional and permanent housing programs. Front Steps was founded in 1997 as the Capital Area Homeless Alliance. Its mission is to provide a pathway home through shelter, affordable housing, and community education. More information can be found at <http://www.frontsteps.org>.