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MEDIA RELEASE

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MHDC Governor's Committee help hundreds of Branson's homeless

Missouri Housing Development Commission (MHDC), The Governor's Committee to End Homelessness (GCEH), multiple social service agencies and more than 130 volunteers came together in Branson on Friday, September 24, to change the lives of homeless individuals and families with Project Homeless Connect.

Project Homeless Connect is a one-day, one-stop event that connects individuals and families experiencing homelessness with a variety of social services. This services delivery model was first introduced in San Francisco in 2004. Since then, more than 200 communities in the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico and Australia have hosted Project Homeless Connect events, and events are now taking part each year throughout Missouri. MHDC holds a seat on The Governor's Committee to End Homelessness. Jenni Miller and Mandy Fangmann from MHDC serve as co-chairs for the GCEH Project Homeless Connect Initiative.

Miller noted that, "During the July 2009 Point-in-Time Homeless Count, the Branson area had one of the largest populations of homeless persons in the Balance of State, which is the 101 rural counties of Missouri. We felt that having a Project Homeless Connect event in Branson would help a lot of people that are in desperate need."

Thirty-three service providers and their staff and/or volunteers were on hand at the Branson event to aid this vulnerable population. Homeless individuals and families that attended were given free haircuts, housing resources, blankets, vision screenings and glasses, medical testing, veteran's benefit assistance, Social Security cards, birth certificates, state IDs, family photos, clothing vouchers, laundry vouchers, toiletries, lunch provided by Golden Corral, entertainment and more.

Many of those who attended this event shared their appreciation for hosting a centralized event. From one young couple: "Wow! We never dreamed something like this (with the different organizations) in one place could ever be pulled off here, but you guys did it. Wow!"

Another participant added that, "I actually felt cared for on a real level, and it lifted my spirit."

Another participant was eager to share that, "I got a job finally, thanks to another guy who was there getting services also. He called his boss, and I got hired! We were just talking to him because our guide introduced us at lunch, and the next thing I know...BOOM, I got a job!"

“This event is about actually helping people get back on their feet,” Miller said. “We helped one gentleman get his photo ID, and he was so grateful that he immediately came back to the event and volunteered the rest of his day to helping others in his situation. This was truly an amazing day, and we’re very thankful to Governor Nixon’s committee, our partners and the volunteers that made it possible.”

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Media questions should be directed to Andi Benson, communications administrator, at 816-759-6658 or abenson@mhdc.com. If you would like to receive this release by e-mail in rich-text format, please email abenson@mhdc.com and provide the e-mail address.