

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

***Annual National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day is Friday, December 21***

**GAINESVILLE, FL (Dec. 19, 2018)** — Friday, December 21 is National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day. The National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) has sponsored this day of remembrance since 1990. According to their website, they wanted to “bring attention to the tragedy of homelessness and to remember those who have died while living without a permanent home.”

From the 2018 study by the Florida Council on Homelessness, there were 29,717 people statewide living on the streets, in the woods or in emergency shelters at the time of their count. In North Central Florida, the most recent Point in Time count found 756 homeless individuals. This year, nine local homeless individuals passed away.

In July of this year, United Way of North Central Florida (UWNCFL) became the lead agency for the North Central Florida Alliance for the Homeless and Hungry (Alliance), the local Continuum of Care (CoC). The Alliance is one of United Way's partnership initiatives to help create additional lasting change in our community.

As the lead agency for the Alliance, United Way is both the fiscal agent and program administrator. We also partner with many local agencies to distribute and expand the resources available to prevent, reduce and ultimately end homelessness.

“United Way fights for the health, education and financial stability of every person in our community,” said UWNCFL President & CEO Mona Gil de Gibaja, MSW, Ph.D. “As the lead for the Alliance, United Way of North Central Florida has a responsibility to help those community members facing the daily struggle of homelessness. The goal for the Alliance is to help these community members gain self-sufficiency again.”

There are 11 local organizations funded by Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Department of Children and Families (DCF) grants through the Alliance. These organizations include Family Promise, Catholic Charities, GRACE Marketplace, St. Francis House and others. These organizations focus on helping individuals, families or both. There are nearly 700 individuals currently waiting for housing and more than 800 homeless children enrolled in Alachua County Public Schools.

The 2019 Point in Time count will take place on January 23, 2019. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Brenda Chamberlain at [bchamberlain@unitedwayncfl.org](mailto:bchamberlain@unitedwayncfl.org).

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