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COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS CELEBRATES 30+ YEARS OF SERVING THOSE WHO SERVE THE HOMELESS

Mayor Annise D. Parker, one of the event's award recipients, shared her powerful, personal journey with homelessness in Houston

Houston, Texas (April 10, 2013) Attendees were discreetly dabbing at their eyes with tissues as Mayor Annise D. Parker shared a not often told story on Friday, April 5, at the [Coalition for the Homeless of Houston and Harris County](#) *Three Decades of Achievement* celebration about how she and her life partner Kathy Hubbard rescued a young man from living on the streets. The sold-out crowd of 350 at the Doubletree by Hilton Houston Downtown was silent as Mayor Parker emphasized how her personal insight would inform her actions to protect and house our community's most vulnerable citizens. Mayor Parker received the Friends of the Homeless - Peg Dudar Individual Advocate award that recognizes an individual's success in inspiring the community at large to become more involved in the fight to end homelessness.

"This is personal for me because it affected my family and affects the lives of so many others," said Mayor Parker. "I appreciate the award and everyone at the Coalition for their support. We are a community, and together we will help those most in need of life's basic necessities."

Click this link to watch Mayor Parker's keynote address at the Coalition *Three Decades of Achievement* celebration:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=f3yzotPwD6U

Coalition Board members, both past and present including Stephen L. Williams, Nancy Frees Fountain, Thomas Verhagen and his wife Ashley, Pastor Rudy Rasmus and Linda K. May were in attendance for this "magical" event. Several of the Coalition co-founders in attendance included, Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza, Reverend William A. Lawson, and former Harris County Judge Jon Lindsay, whom were all jubilant about the accomplishments of the Coalition and Houston-area homeless service providers. Other notables in the crowd included: David Ruiz of Bank of America, the corporate honoree who received a Friends of the Homeless

Award; Diane Hasell Englet and Lucretia Ahrens of CenterPoint Energy; Mandy Chapman Semple, Special Assistant to the Mayor for Homeless Initiatives; Friends of the Homeless Award Honoree Media/Journalist recipient Lisa Falkenberg, columnist for [The Houston Chronicle](#); Robert M. Eury, President of Central Houston, who brilliantly summarized the Coalition's 30+ year history in 8 minutes; and the event's two superstars: Achievers of the Year, Friends of the Homeless honorees, Shane Schlemeyer and Twaunette Sharpe, both of whom were formerly homeless and are now active, engaged members of the community.

Marilyn L. Brown, Coalition President & CEO, concluded the luncheon program with the release of the preliminary results of the 2013 Point-in-Time Homeless Count. She shared the good news regarding a 27% drop in homelessness as many formerly homeless individuals have been transitioned to permanent supportive housing during the time period of January 2011 to January 2013. She also shared that the program to house 100 homeless veterans and/or chronically homeless individuals in 100 days, is now in its fourth phase having housed 487 veterans and chronically homeless individuals to date. Brown announced a special Collaborative Award for homeless service providers by honoring Mark Thiele of the City of Houston, Houston Housing Authority, who spearheaded the 100 in 100 campaign in Houston.

To recap, the honorees of the Friends of the Homeless Award Honorees recognized at the event were: Achiever of the Year -- Shane Schlemeyer and Twaunette Sharpe; Business/Corporation -- Bank of America; Foundation -- The Frees Foundation; Peg Dudar Individual Advocate -- Mayor Annise D. Parker; Media/Journalist -- Lisa Falkenberg, [The Houston Chronicle](#); Sally Shipman Service Provider Staff -- Eva Thibaudeau-Graczyk, SEARCH Homeless Services.

Sponsors and partners involved in *Three Decades of Achievement* included: Marilyn L. Brown; City of Houston, Health and Human Services Department; The Frees Foundation; Harris County Department of Education; The Greensheet; Diane and Tim Horan; Houston Downtown Management District; The Lee Group; Martha and Aris Macris; Kimberly Sterling/Sterling Associates; Ashley and Thomas J. N. Verhagen; Houston Housing Authority; New Hope Housing; The University of Houston Graduate School of Social Work and Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church.

The **Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County** was established in 1982, incorporated as a 501(c)(3) in 1988, and has evolved to be the lead agency coordinating the

community response to homelessness in Houston. Under the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, passed in 2009, an entire community rather than individual service providers must demonstrate success in preventing and reducing homelessness. In 2011, HUD named Houston as a priority community. This designation recognizes the great need to transform Houston's existing homeless service system and the tremendous opportunity to make significant advances due to the commitment of homeless service providers and key community stakeholders, including both private and public contributors. For more information about the Coalition's efforts, visit www.homelesshouston.org.

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