



## ON WORLD HOMELESS DAY, COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS HONORS HOUSTONIANS MAKING STRIDES TO END HOMELESSNESS

***“Joy, Hope and Thanks,” sponsored by CenterPoint Energy, included awards, dancing, treats and storytelling for front line heroes working to end homelessness***

**HOUSTON, Texas (October 14, 2014)** ---- The [Coalition for the Homeless of Houston and Harris County](#) hosted a private, free event for local homeless service provider staffers and volunteers on Friday, October 10, 2014 at the Children’s Museum of Houston. The event, ***Joy, Hope and Thanks*** was divided into two parts. The first hour was whimsical - treating guests to light party bites, mini-chair massages provided by Massage Heights – Washington Heights’ location, and a roving magician. A few guests even got into the playful spirit and grooved to the “Cupid Shuffle.” The second, formal hour was held in the Museum’s Brown Auditorium to present Houston’s ***World Homeless Day Awards*** (formerly known as the Coalition’s annual Friends of the Homeless awards).

New Coalition Board Chair Andy Teas and President/CEO Marilyn Brown emceed the awards event. Brown presented Teas with a special proclamation from City of Houston Mayor Annise Parker in connection with the event, proclaiming it “Houston’s World Homeless Day,” in recognition of the major collaborative effort underway by the Coalition and partners involved in [The Way Home](#), Houston’s Continuum of Care campaign to end homelessness.

Brown then surprised a few individuals in the audience with a playful, but heartfelt tribute by presenting them with “Transformer” toys indicative of their own respective prowess.

“Some of our colleagues have gone to the head of the class in this transformation underway, as we work together on our common goals for ***The Way Home***. Transformation work is complex and difficult. And, fortunately for us, every once in a while, a system is blessed with leaders who truly have that special ingredient that makes them natural transformers – they can work the puzzles and help others shift as needed. Today, we wanted to recognize the following individuals who have lead the way as true transformers,” said Brown as she presented the tribute toys to [Tom McCasland](#), CEO of the Harris County Housing Authority; [Tory Gunsolley](#), President and CEO of the Houston Housing Authority; and Mandy Chapman Semple, Special Assistant to the Mayor for Homeless Initiatives (in absentia).

Community Advocate Noah Rattler addressed the guests by reading an excerpt from his book with Co-Author Nekisha Pickney ***Noah’s Walk***, an inspiring children’s tale that tells the story of Rattler’s journey while walking 1,800 miles from Houston, Texas to Los Angeles, California, to raise awareness for homelessness. Rattler applauded the group on the major strides that have been made in the past two years, as the Houston/Harris County Continuum of Care has mobilized.

Coalition Board Chair Andy Teas announced Houston’s World Homeless Day award recipients, which included:

**Achievers of the Year** (recognizing formerly homeless individuals who has successfully transitioned from homelessness, demonstrated self-sufficiency, and are living a positive lifestyle) - Laura Fowler, Steven Marshall

**Business/Corporation** - Chevron Corporation

**Housing Partner** - New Hope Housing, Inc.

**Media Champion** - Jayme Fraser, Houston Chronicle

**Peg Dudar Individual Advocate** - John C. Sarvadi

**Sally Shipman Service Provider Staff** - Jessica Preheim

**Services Partner** - Harris Health System Health Care for the Homeless Program

**Spirit of Collaboration** - SSVF/RRH Workgroup (Supportive Services for Veteran Families/Rapid Re-Housing Workgroup which includes Career and Recovery Resources, Inc., The Housing Corp, Salvation Army, Goodwill Industries, Neighborhood Centers, Inc., U.S.VETS, and VA National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans).

Other guests in attendance included: Angela Cox ([CenterPoint Energy](#), Event Sponsor); Karen Rawls (Chevron); Joy Horak-Brown and Tamara Foster (New Hope Housing, Inc.); Thao Costis and Lisa Estes (SEARCH Homeless Services); Ronda Robinson (Covenant House Texas).

Andy Teas wrapped up the event by reiterating how much the Coalition appreciated the work of the many individuals on the front lines. In keeping with the playful vibe of the event, departing guests received party favors – CenterPoint Energy shopping bags containing coffee mugs, free coffee and latte’ gift cards to Houston area Dunkin’ Donuts locations, gourmet candy and chocolate apples, and the Coalition’s [just released 2013/2014 Progress Report](#).

Event photos (named files) can be viewed

here: <https://www.dropbox.com/sc/mr3wtfjggg3qalj/AAB48coMmLXoF8GoMj-Jhhc2a>

Photo credits – *Cheyenna Brehm Photography*.

###

*The **Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County** is a non-profit 501(C) 3 whose mission is to provide leadership in the development, advocacy and coordination of community strategies to prevent and end homelessness. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) named Houston as a priority community to help end homelessness. Learn more at [www.homelesshouston.org](http://www.homelesshouston.org).*

**Media Contact:**

Jennifer Evans

(832) 692-7615

jen@jlevans.com