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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lafayette County Unsheltered Count Results

LEXINGTON, MO – On Wednesday, January 28, 2015 volunteers with the Lafayette County Social Service Committee of the Health Care Collaborative (HCC) of Rural Missouri staffed and walked locations in Lexington and throughout the county, as part of the winter 2015 “point-in-time” count of unsheltered families and individuals.

The count was sponsored by the Governor’s Committee to End Homelessness, under the Missouri Housing Development Commission. Its purpose was to have as accurate a count as possible of the number of unsheltered individuals and families in our county at one particular point in time, in order to help ensure that the housing needs of our county are clearly known, and so that needed funding can be fairly distributed to local agencies who serve unsheltered and financially struggling members of our community.

More than 30 volunteers made up from county residents and service providers such as: Pathways Community Health, Missouri Valley Community Action Agency, HCC/Live Well Community Health Center, Lafayette County Health Department, Easter Seals Midwest, University of Missouri Extension, Roberts Memorial Library, and area school districts, collected basic and non-personally identifiable information about individuals and families specifically regarding their current status as unsheltered. Individuals who are “doubled-up” (sleeping on a friend or family member’s couch or floor, for example) were encouraged to speak with a volunteer, as this information was helpful in reflecting the degree of our county’s need for more affordable housing. Hygiene and snack items

donated by area businesses and individuals such as: Higginsville – Orscheln, Wal-Mart, MVCAA; Lexington – Sav-A-Lot, HCC/Live Well Community Health Centers, Lexington School District, Lafayette County Health Department, House of Hope, Crossroads Hospice, Heidi Lynn, Amanda Arnold, Nicky Bennett were made be available to those who participated.

County coordinator Christy Merrick stated that, “The energy and passion from our volunteers was amazing, and the numbers reflect that.” Periodic updates were sent to the volunteers throughout the day. Challenges were made between teams to search even harder before the day was over. “We had volunteers knocking door-to-door, hiking in wooded areas, searching cemeteries, parks, rest stops, campgrounds, and truck stops. We canvassed businesses like gas stations, motels, fast-food restaurants, police, and fire stations. We searched anywhere that we thought the homeless might be found and talked to anyone that we thought could help direct our efforts,” stated Merrick. The total number of men, women, teens, and children that were identified was 143. Of that 15 were literally on the street with 3 under the age of 18. For more information about the Point in Time Homeless Count contact Christy Merrick at 660-259-2440 or by email at christy@hccnetwork.org.

The Lafayette County Social Service Committee is a collaboration between local social service agency representatives, churches, and concerned individuals to network and leverage resources in service of our neighbors struggling with poverty, disparities, barriers to health, and homelessness. The group meets on the first Wednesday of every month at 9:00 AM in the training room of the HCC offices in Lexington, MO. For more information on HCC visit <http://www.hccnetwork.org>.