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MORE THAN 3,000 NEW YORKERS VOLUNTEER FOR HOPE ANNUAL COUNT OF STREET HOMELESS

City releases video with Ben Stiller voiceover urging more people to volunteer: <http://youtu.be/9fxM9Shoi-Y>

New mobile application will increase accuracy of count

NEW YORK – New York City’s Department of Homeless Services today announced the registration of its 3,000th volunteer for this year’s Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE) 2016 annual street count. Federally mandated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, HOPE is a national effort to count the homeless.

“We’re committed to using every tool possible to help bring New Yorkers living on our streets into shelter to receive the services they need and deserve,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “HOME-STAT is the nation’s most comprehensive street homeless outreach program, and we’re doubling drop-in centers, adding 500 Safe Haven Beds, and adding 15,000 units of supportive housing in order to ensure we have as many pathways as possible to bring New Yorkers off the streets. We’re proud to see over three thousand New Yorkers of all walks of life join us for our yearly HOPE count to help serve their brothers and sisters living on our city’s streets.”

In New York City, volunteers count the number of individuals living on city streets who are chronically street homeless. Taking place Monday, January 25, 2016 starting at 10:30pm, the night-long event will draw teams of volunteers to canvass city streets, parks and subways throughout all five boroughs to enumerate chronically street homeless individuals. The information collected is used to improve the City’s outreach efforts in aiding this shelter-resistant population leave the streets permanently behind. To provide ongoing information about the number of homeless New Yorkers in addition to the one-night HOPE count, last month Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the establishment of HOME-STAT.

“To be able to help move homeless New Yorkers off the streets, we have to have accurate information about how many there are and where they are. This year’s strong interest in volunteering for the Count displays New Yorkers’ great compassion for their street homeless neighbors. The City would be unable to conduct this large-scale survey each year without community members dedicating themselves to the cause,” said **Human Resources Administration Commissioner Steven Banks**. “The federally mandated HOPE count provides numbers for one point in time. That’s why Mayor de Blasio created HOME-STAT, which will give us continuing information about the number and location of homeless New Yorkers and better tools for bringing them inside.”

Actor and director Ben Stiller has been actively helping recruit volunteers for HOPE. Over the last several months, Stiller has encouraged his 5.08 million Twitter followers to sign up and participate in the count. You can see an example of his messaging [here](#). This week the City released a video with voiceover by Ben Stiller urging more people to volunteer. The video can be found [here](#).

To help boost the efficiency and productivity of the program, this year, the City will pilot a new HOPE mobile iOS app allowing volunteers to use GPS-powered maps of their assigned routes and submit digital questionnaires. The digital capabilities will increase efficiency, accuracy and accountability in the data collection process, as well as improve analytic efforts. Five teams (one in each borough) will be equipped with this technology.

City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito sent out an e-mail letter to all Council Members and their staff late last week asking for their participation. Involvement by elected officials is the highest ever this year; 17 elected officials will be joining the group.

“It’s not easy to bring many street homeless off the street permanently. That’s why Mayor de Blasio has put in place all the tools needed to find New Yorkers living on the streets, win their trust and move them into a program that will provide services targeted to their needs,” said **Commissioner Banks**. “That starts with HOME-STAT, the most comprehensive outreach program, and substantially increasing drop-in centers, safe haven beds and supportive housing- the programs proven to help homeless individuals come in from the streets.”

Last Monday, DHS held #nycHOPEday, a Twitter social media event focused on encouraging New Yorkers to spread compassion for the City's street homeless population, asking their family, friends, colleagues and neighbors to "register for HOPE." Participants contributed pictures of themselves holding signs explaining the importance of HOPE to themselves, their communities and the city. An example of this twitter messaging can be found [here](#).

Several participating elected officials, including Assembly Member Walter Mosley, Council Members Helen Rosenthal, Rosie Mendez, Stephen Levin, Corey Johnson, Ben Kallos, Vincent Gentile, and State Senators Brad Hoylman and Gustavo Rivera also posted “selfies” with a similar message, sharing the tagged posts with their constituents via the channel. Through this effort, DHS was able to secure 221 volunteer registrants, the second highest single day registration number ever for the NYC HOPE Count.

DHS aims to surpass the 3,000 volunteers previously recruited for the 2015 count, and continues to encourage New Yorkers to volunteer. To learn more about how you can register to become a volunteer, please visit www.nyc.gov/hope.

“The enthusiastic response to HOPE 2016 proves that New Yorkers are ready, willing and able to step up and help their neighbors in need,” said **Council Member and Chair of the General Welfare Committee Stephen Levin**. “This important project is crucial to crafting effective, data-driven policy that helps put chronically street homeless New Yorkers back on the path to stable homes, jobs and lives. The HOPE count depends on the generosity and compassion of thousands of volunteers and it is inspiring to see so many New Yorkers from all walks of life come together to donate their time and energy to help the most vulnerable among us.”

“The Homeless Outreach Population Estimate is an invaluable tool in the effort to end homelessness in New York,” said **State Senator Brad Hoylman**. “The Department of Homeless Services' announcement of 3,000 registered HOPE volunteers for this year means the City will have the resources necessary to accurately measure the scope of homelessness across the city and improve services. I congratulate DHS for undertaking this important effort on behalf of New York’s most vulnerable population.”

“I am ecstatic to see that New Yorkers answered the HOPE 2016 call for volunteers,” said **Council Member Vincent Gentile**. “With 3,000 registrants, this year’s annual street count will have a profound impact on the City’s outreach efforts. I look forward to joining volunteers at P.S. 102 in Bay Ridge on January 25.”

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