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**First Day of Winter Marks National Homeless Persons Memorial Day**

**OKANOGAN, WA** -- The Face of Homelessness in Okanogan County campaign will help raise awareness of what people in our community who live without permanent housing face every day. The social media campaign will launch on December 21, 2022, which is the first day of winter and National Homeless Persons Memorial Day.

“Our county is facing a housing crisis which is taking a toll on members of our community who live on the margins,” says Okanogan County Commissioner Chris Branch, who also serves on the Board of Directors for the Okanogan County Community Action Council (OCCAC), the lead agency supporting the Okanogan County Housing Coalition. Inflation, free-market housing prices, the lack of living-wage jobs, poverty, and wildfires are all factors that often push people into homelessness. “These are not strangers but our neighbors,” says Branch. In fact, between 70-80 percent of all people living without housing are from local areas.

A new social media campaign called **The Face of Homelessness in Okanogan County** will feature information about people living without housing and can be found on the social sites of members of the Okanogan County Housing Coalition.

The number of unsheltered people and people experiencing chronic homelessness is increasing by about two percent every year across the nation. In Okanogan County, homelessness among working families, veterans and youth is on the rise and includes youth who are couch surfing and people living in RVs that are not hooked up to water or electricity. Homelessness among women, as well as Hispanic and Native populations, is also rising. A conservatively low estimate of 1,000 people in Okanogan County are living without permanent housing every night.

Members of the Okanogan County Housing Coalition are working to raise awareness of the issues of homelessness and correct common myths about people facing homelessness that leads to stigma, which creates more barriers for the unhoused.

To learn more about **The Face of Homelessness in Okanogan County** and the Okanogan County Housing Coalition, go to [www.occac.com/livingwithouthousing](http://www.occac.com/livingwithouthousing).

**The Okanogan County Housing Coalition is funded by Okanogan County in partnership with the following organizations:** *Okanogan County Community Action, Housing Authority of Okanogan County, Oroville Housing Authority, Housing Authority of the Colville Confederated Tribes, The Support Center, Room One, FYRE, Okanogan Homeless Shelter, Okanogan Behavioral Health Care.*

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