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## **WINTER NOT DONE WITH KANSAS CITY HOMELESS STILL FACE SERIOUS THREAT**

### **Cold Wet Weather Tough on Unsheltered How the Community Can Help**

At this time of year, everyone gets tired of winter and begins looking forward to Spring. However, winter has a way of lingering with late bursts of cold, rain, sleet and snow. This wintry mix is potentially deadly weather for those with no place to escape it. Shelter KC (formerly the Kansas City Rescue Mission) understands that there is never a good time to sleep on the streets – but winter has to be the worst time to live rough.

Shelter KC has been working to educate the community about the warning signs of hypothermia. The reason for this educational effort is to help people spot the symptoms of life-threatening cold in the homeless individuals they might encounter. Deadly hypothermia can come on quickly. Over the past several years, homeless deaths have been attributed to this preventable problem. If even one life is lost, it is too much.

“The five signs of hypothermia are: confusion, shivering, difficulty speaking, sleepiness and stiff muscles,” said Eric Burger, Executive Director of Shelter KC. “When it is cold, most people stay inside or bundle up with winter clothing. Those who find themselves homeless often do not have that option. Shelter KC works hard to make sure there is shelter from the brutal cold and wet.”

Shelter KC has 62 short-term shelter beds for men on most nights, but when the weather turns nasty, more than 100 can be accommodated inside. And the shelter expects to be full as night-time temperatures drop into the teens this week.

More than an opportunity to come in from the cold, Shelter KC provides beds, showers, meals, medical services and one-on-one counseling to encourage men to look towards a future off the street. In addition, there is a long-term recovery program for men and women seeking help leaving the streets.

Shelter KC served nearly 10,000 meals in January, provided 4,300 shelter nights and had 63 people in its long-term recovery programs.

The hard realities of winter means resources at Shelter KC are stretched to the max. There is an ongoing need for donations of food and blankets plus winter clothing like socks, coats, gloves and hats. And, of course, cold weather challenges finances with higher utility bills.

Those wishing to help can go to the Mission's website <https://www.shelterkc.org>.

Shelter KC – A Kansas City Rescue Mission is a Christ-centered community offering freedom and hope to the poor and homeless, empowering them to reach their full potential. Established in 1950, it has been our ongoing mission to serve people in desperate need.

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Editor's note: Shelter KC is able to accommodate news media who may wish to highlight the issues facing the homeless in cold weather. If you are interested in finding out more or getting real-time stories from the streets, contact Eric or Connie at the numbers above.