



**AZ Coalition to End Homlessness'
16th Annual Statewide Conference
Remarks by Gov. Jan Brewer
Monday, October 26, 2009**

Thank you, Brad.

I am pleased to be with you this morning – to be with a group of caring people whose commitment to find solutions to homelessness is something that has long kept our state as a shining example of stewardship.

You have given your time and talents and compassion to help those less fortunate in a way that no government or institution can.

You have set an example for all of Arizona

As you probably know, caring for those suffering homelessness has always been close to my heart.

I take great pride in having assisted with the development of Central Arizona Shelter Services, serving as Co-Chairman of the Continuum of Care organization, and helping create the Maricopa County Homeless campus -- which continues to serve the destitute, the desperate, the discouraged in righting their lives and recovering self-sufficiency.

I don't have to tell you that these are serious and difficult times for our state, and that I am doing my best to protect the most vulnerable from added hardship.

But the statistics are daunting.

Emergency shelters statewide are full.

In fact, the "overflow" shelters are full -- and up to 200 people are choosing to sleep in a fenced parking lot rather than on the streets in Phoenix.

Sixty percent of the homeless families seeking crisis shelter in Maricopa County are turned away due to lack of capacity.

Twenty-four thousand school-aged students in Arizona experienced homelessness during the last school year. That's an 18 percent increase over the previous year.

Forty percent of the people receiving assistance from homeless service providers are experiencing homelessness for the first time.

While homelessness in the U.S. decreased by 10 percent between 2005 and 2007, it increased over 19 percent in Arizona.

So, what are we doing?

We are rolling up our sleeves, and not succumbing to the depressing statistics.

First, it is important to understand the REASONS behind homelessness.

Sometimes, it is the result of a lost job or unforeseen medical expenses.

Other times, it is the result of substance abuse or mental health issues.

The Division for Substance Abuse Policy within the Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families is working to identify, assist, and support the efforts of state agencies and other stakeholders to serve these communities.

It is estimated that there are approximately 25,000 homeless youth in Arizona.

Homeless youth are the silent population.

In many cases, they leave home to escape lives endangered by physical, mental or sexual abuse.

The Governor's Youth Commission, staffed by the Division for Community and Youth Development, addressed the issue of youth homelessness in a 2009 report titled "*Addressing the Issues of Today's Youth.*"

The recommendations in the report will be further researched and evaluated by the 2009-10 Governor's Youth Commission class.

In April, I announced \$771,000 in awards to help shelters around the state that are facing imminent closures.

The funding will allow the services to more than 700 Arizonans, including children, to continue into fiscal year 2010.

The funding is critical to keeping the doors open to these homeless shelters as demand dramatically increases.

I know that funding cuts and declines in private contributions have continued to decimate existing homeless programs throughout the state, undermining the ability of the providers to offset the overwhelming demand.

The current economic conditions have created a wave of Arizonans who have never been homeless before, and these individuals and families are showing up at shelter doors.

This funding will allow Central Arizona Shelter Services to continue serving 325 with shelter beds and prevent 100 to 200 additional persons currently staying in the parking lot from being turned into the neighborhood.

UMOM can keep funding 35 rooms, open to serve an estimated 122 Arizonans, including 87 children.

A NEW LEAF in Mesa can keep services for 30 Arizona families and 84 individuals.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES in Prescott can help cover operating costs for six emergency units and 14 transitional units, serving approximately 50 people per night.

THE PRIMAVERA FOUNDATION in Tucson can provide services to 30 Arizonans per night.

On July 1, the Housing Arizona Youth Project was launched as contracts for participation were awarded to 4 providers in 5 counties: Tumbleweed Center for Youth Development and A&A Cottages in Maricopa County, Open Inn and La Paloma Family Services in Pima County, and Open Inn in Coconino, Yavapai, and Cochise counties.

Within the first quarter of the project, 42 youth were moved from abandoned buildings, parks, and adult shelters to permanent, safe rental units -- ending their homelessness.

The Housing Arizona Youth Project provides youth ages 18 through 25 experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness with assistance to immediately access housing.

The Project enhances existing homeless youth programs by increasing their statewide capacity to house youth, and therefore decreasing the number of youth living on Arizona's streets and in shelters designed for adults.

The Project is specifically designed to target youth in the highest risk categories.

The first \$1 million designated for the Youth Project will be used over two years to demonstrate the possibilities for implementing the best practices of "Housing First" and "Rapid re-housing" with homeless youth.

Ending homelessness requires collaboration among state agencies, local governments, the private sector and service provider networks to coordinate program development, deliver essential services and provide housing. Federal, State, and local governments, national service organizations, corporations, churches, synagogues, and voluntary groups, must continue to work together to provide food, shelter, and comfort for the needy.

I know Arizonans will continue their partnership and resolve to invigorate their commitment to reach out to their fellow Arizonans in need, as we savor the blessings of compassion and goodwill that comes from helping end the suffering of homelessness.

Thank you, again, for your good works.

May God bless you and your families, and the great – CARING -- State of Arizona.