



January 17, 2012

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Winter is a dangerous time to be homeless in Cleveland, but YOU can help

Care Alliance distributes cold-weather supplies to Cleveland's neediest residents

Cleveland, Ohio – There are thousands of people in Cuyahoga County who don't know where they will sleep tonight. This is an unfortunate situation during warmer months, but in the winter, the prospect of living outdoors can be downright treacherous. Care Alliance Health Center, which has been providing health care to the homeless for more than 25 years, is asking the community for help once again this winter.

"Every year, we treat frostbite and other cold-weather conditions in our homeless patients," said Donna Kelly, outreach nurse manager at Care Alliance. "Sometimes the simplest way to protect our patients' health is to keep them safe and warm as they weather the elements."

Ms. Kelly coordinates a team of outreach workers who visit people living under bridges, in abandoned buildings and in homeless campsites throughout Cleveland to deliver medical care. Often the first step toward building trust among this population is to help them with basic needs. To support these efforts, Care Alliance is calling for donations of hats, gloves and socks (for both men and women) from the community. Donors can drop off these items 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday at Care Alliance's downtown clinic at 1530 St. Clair Ave.

"It's easy to pick up a bag of socks or an extra knit cap during weekly errands," said Ms. Kelly, "and you wouldn't believe the difference it can make. Not only does a small gift like this keep someone warm, it also gives us an opportunity to build trust and encourage people to let us help them when they are sick."

Care Alliance hosts a winter drive each year to supplement the support received through charitable support of programs like Plain Dealer Holiday Spirit and the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland. More than 2/3 of the 9,500 patients Care Alliance serves are homeless. For more information about items Care Alliance is accepting for donation; how to organize a drive with your school, place of worship, or workplace; or to learn about Care Alliance services; please visit www.carealliance.org.

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