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NEWS RELEASE

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End Homelessness Week Initiatives

The City of Bristol will mark *End Homelessness Week* from November 24-30 to raise awareness of local needs.

Mayor Ellen Zoppo-Sassu stated that she and members of the City Council are working with the local social service agencies including United Way of West Central Connecticut, Brian's Angels, The Agape House, Salvation Army, Bristol PD and Bristol Outreach Workers to raise awareness.

"For example, St. Vincent DePaul, the only local overnight shelter, has a limited amount of overnight rooms and does not have sufficient funding to operate its Winter Overflow Shelter," said the Mayor. "A Wine Tasting fundraiser is set for Thursday, December 5th, at Chippanee to raise money for that void." Tickets are \$45 and available at the Mayor's Office or online via the St. Vincent DePaul Mission of Bristol's Facebook page.

"The Stock Our Shelters initiative on Election Day netted needed food items for our pantries and soup kitchens, as well as approximately \$3,000 in cash donations, however, there continues to be a need to focus on individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness," said Councilwoman Mary Fortier.

The United Way of West Central Connecticut facilitates the Bristol Task Force to End Homelessness. "This diverse group works collaboratively to build a homelessness response and prevention system that meets the needs of people in Bristol experiencing homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless," said Donna Osuch, President of United Way.

United Way's 2-1-1 is a free health and human service information and referral helpline. Calls are answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If someone is in a crisis or calling on behalf of someone in crisis, they should dial 2-1-1 and press option 1. Calls from individuals in crisis situations are prioritized.

In addition, Connecticut has a Coordinated Access Network (CAN) to help connect people experiencing homelessness to services. In order to access services and shelter, people can call 2-1-1 and select Options 3 and then 1 where a specialist will assess the situation and potentially refer the individual to the regional CAN for an intake appointment.

For fuel assistance, Bristol residents should call HRA's Operation Fuel to set up an Energy Assistance appointment at 860-356-2000. The United Way of West Central Connecticut 2-1-1 line is the first step to finding shelter. If you are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, contact Vera Clarke, PATHY Outreach worker at 860-225-0211 ext. 209.

The Holiday Farmers Market on Saturday, November 23rd from 10am-1pm will be a collection point for both monetary donations and non-perishable food items to continue the efforts of stocking the local food pantries. "The City will be giving out a complimentary Bristol All Heart item to anyone who donates," said Councilman Dave Preleski, liaison to the Bristol Development Authority. "This is a community issue that all of us can work together to provide some short-term relief, while we continue to explore long-term solutions."

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