

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Beginning of the End to Pinellas County's Homeless

Directions for Mental Health, Inc. Provide Street Outreach Services

Clearwater FL, February 27, 2007- The plight of homeless persons in St. Petersburg has sparked much debate over the past few months and now Pinellas County Government has adopted an ambitious plan to end homelessness. *Directions for Mental Health*, a non-profit community health center in Clearwater, is moving forward to help Pinellas County's homeless people get the help they need to start a new life.

Street outreach workers provided by Directions for Mental Health will collaborate with law enforcement officers in the Pinellas Park and Lealman areas of Pinellas County. The plan is to reduce the number of people living on the streets by offering psychological support and linkages to needed services to those in need.

With almost 20 years of experience specifically working with homeless persons, Directions for Mental Health is well trained in dealing with those who are in need of mental health and substance abuse treatment.

“Forming a trusting relationship with individuals living on the street is the initial and most critical step in the process of rehabilitation,” R. Thomas Riggs, President and CEO of Directions for Mental Health said. “Then, we attempt to connect (or reconnect) the person to needed health, mental health, substance abuse recovery, social welfare, and shelter or other housing services.”

The program begins this month with a full-time and part-time person working closely with select officers from the Pinellas Park Police Department and the Sheriff's Department. Emergency financial assistance is included on a limited basis to assist in linkage to these critical services.

In a separate funding process, the County has added a number of shelters along with various housing resources in Pinellas to meet the need and thus reduce the number of the homeless population.

About Directions for Mental Health, Inc.

Directions for Mental Health, Inc., established in 1982, is a non-profit organization committed to helping heal the hurt in the lives of thousands of Pinellas County residents suffering from—or at risk of—mental illness. With nationally accredited programs, Directions sets the standard for best practices in mental health treatment, while making mental health care affordable and accessible to individuals and families, and building a safer, healthier community. Serving more than 8,000 people per year, Directions is

dedicated to developing innovative programs that change lives, while reducing crime, homelessness, drug abuse and child abuse.

For questions about mental illness and programs, visit Directions for Mental Health's website at www.directionsmh.org or call (727) 524-4464 extension 1700.

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