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The Basic Needs Coalition of Central Texas Announces

POVERTY AWARENESS MONTH

Why Poverty Awareness Month in Austin, Texas? Austin is considered by many one of THE best places to live and work. However, 144,336 Travis County residents, our friends and neighbors, currently live in poverty.¹ That's enough people to fill UT's Darrel K. Royal Stadium and leave half as many standing in line outside.

What does it mean to live in poverty in Austin, Texas? It means choosing between buying food for your children or paying your gas bill to keep your home warm this winter. Or choosing between paying the rent or filling your prescriptions.

Imagine a family of four trying to survive on income of \$21,200 a year in OUR community. The sad truth is that nearly 15 percent of residents in Travis County live below that amount, the current federal poverty level for a family of four, and must make such wrenching decisions every day. Of those 144,336 individuals living in poverty in Travis County, more than 47,723 (19%) are children under the age of 18.²

These are individuals and families who simply do not have enough money to cover their basic needs.

- 1 in 7 Travis County residents (15%) were living in poverty in 2008, higher than the national poverty rate (13%);³
- 1 in 5 children under the age of 18 were living in poverty in Travis County in 2008;⁴
- 1 in 3 children raised in poverty remain in poverty as adults.⁵
 - Boys raised in poverty are twice as likely to be arrested and three times as likely to be incarcerated.⁶
 - Girls raised in poverty are five times as likely to bear a child out of wedlock prior to the age of twenty-one.⁷
 - Texas has the fastest growing child population in the country and the Central Texas child population is growing at twice the state rate.⁸

¹ Sources: American Community Survey, http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=ACS&_submenuId=&_lang=en&_ts=; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/08Poverty.shtml>

² Sources: *Ibid*

³ Sources: *Ibid*

⁴ Sources: *Ibid*

⁵ Source: First Focus, 2009

⁶ Source: Partnership for America's Economic Success, 2008

⁷ Source: *Ibid*

- The cost of living in the Austin area is significantly higher than the recognized “poverty level” -- families need incomes 2-3 times greater than the Federal poverty guidelines to be able to afford basic monthly expenses;⁹
- Eighty-four percent of Travis County families living in poverty did not receive any type of cash assistance and 72-percent of families in poverty did not receive food stamps in 2008;¹⁰
- In Texas childhood poverty costs \$57.5 billion dollars annually.¹¹

What does all this mean for Austin? Poverty has many tangible costs for our community:¹²

- Loss of human potential and productivity
- Reduction of workforce readiness and economic competitiveness
- Higher health insurance premiums and doctor bills
- Increased crime and the rising cost of prisons
- Exacerbation of racial divisions
- Family instability and breakup

This is *YOUR* Austin and *OUR* future.

How can YOU make a difference?

Donate your time and money to local organizations dedicated to providing basic needs and services to people affected by poverty in Central Texas, learn how at:

- The “How to Help” page of the Basic Needs Coalition website, www.basicneedscoalition.org
- I Live Here I Give Here, www.ilivehereigivehere.org
- United Way, www.unitedwaycapitalarea.org or www.handsoncentraltexas.org

Support public policy initiatives that create real solutions for adequate healthcare, childcare, living wages, education and disability assistance , learn how at:

- Center for Public Policy Priorities, www.cppp.org

Learn more about poverty in our community at:

- Community Action Network, www.caction.org
- 2008 American Community Survey Analysis, www.co.travis.tx.us

About BNC

The Basic Needs Coalition is a partnership among more than 40 different non-profits and government agencies focused on heightening the Austin and Central Texas Communities’ understanding of the breadth and depth of poverty. The Mission of the Basic Needs Coalition of Central Texas is to lead the community in creating solutions that secure the basic resources of our neighbors in need. The Vision of the Basic Needs Coalition of Central Texas is to eliminate the effects of poverty and promote self-sufficiency.

<http://www.basicneeds-ctx.org>

****Hyperlinks available to all source materials at www.caction.org**

⁸ Source: First Focus, 2009

⁹ Source: American Community Survey, http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=ACS&_submenuId=&_lang=en&_ts=

¹⁰ Source: American Community Survey, http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=ACS&_submenuId=&_lang=en&_ts=

¹¹ Source: Center for Housing Policy, 2006

¹² Source: Wisconsin Community Action Program Association, <http://www.wiscap.org/pdfs/Poverty%20Matters%20-%20Facing%20Poverty%20in%20Wisconsin.pdf>

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