



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **“Your Way Home Montgomery County” Summit Brings Together Nearly 200 Government, Philanthropy, Nonprofit and Community Participants**

*Initiative Has Helped Move 274 People from Shelters or the Streets into Homes since January; Public-Private Partnership Working to End Homelessness in Montgomery County*

**BLUE BELL, PA (May 29, 2014)** – Officials from Montgomery County government joined area philanthropic, nonprofit, housing and community partners today at the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual “Your Way Home Montgomery County” summit at Montgomery County Community College. “Your Way Home (YWH) Montgomery County” is a public-private partnership dedicated to improving the housing stability, economic security and health of Montgomery County residents. The summit commemorated the successful launch of YWH and provided an update on its impact on reducing homelessness in Montgomery County. YWH, launched in January 2014, is focused on coordinating, leveraging and maximizing the impact of public and private resources to end homelessness in Montgomery County.

The YWH’s Leadership Council’s Co-Chairs, Kathy Phifer (executive director of Montgomery County’s Department of Housing and Community Development) and Russell Johnson (President and CEO of North Penn Community Health Foundation) kicked off the summit by describing the public-private partnership. Johnson continued, noting how various service providers and community partners – from housing, health care, employment, education and other areas – are coming together to support and improve the overall health of those experiencing homelessness. Following their opening remarks they introduced the summit’s keynote speaker, Montgomery County Board of Commissioners Chairman, Josh Shapiro. Shapiro outlined the County’s vision for reducing homelessness. In addition, he explained how the County has eliminated the silos that previously had stifled coordination among different departments and embraced a streamlined approach to better serve residents in need.

“Our goal is to reduce homelessness by 50% and decrease the wait time for sustainable housing in Montgomery County over the next five years. By creating more coordination, collaboration, communication and accountability among government, philanthropic, nonprofit and community partners, we are on our way to meeting this goal and achieving better health, housing and financial outcomes for our most vulnerable residents” said Commissioner Shapiro.

“Your Way Home Montgomery County is unique. We are not aware of another community in the United States committed to such an innovative public-private partnership to end homelessness,” said Phifer.

Jason Alexander of Capacity for Change, a strategy consulting firm serving as the backbone organization guiding the vision and supporting aligned activities of the Your Way Home public-private partnership, followed Commissioner Shapiro and presented the Your Way Home Community Impact Report. Alexander shared that 1,172 people in Montgomery County suffered from homelessness in 2013, but since January YWH has helped 274 people move from shelters or the streets to their own apartment. In addition, Alexander outlined YWH's goals, strategies and future priorities as well as introduced the myriad funders, partners and leadership council that have collectively achieved the results to date.

"Over 200 funders, providers, community partners and consumers in the county have helped make policy and funding recommendations," said Alexander. "As a result, Your Way Home has received over \$415,000 in philanthropic investments to spur innovation and scale its impact."

"Your Way Home is leveraging the resources of both the private and public sectors to serve those who experience homelessness in Montgomery County," said Johnson. "Our shelter provider partners are using new tools and strategies to assist their clients to rapidly develop a housing plan and then offer help to secure safe, stable and affordable housing. These new tools and strategies are more cost-effective and provide a more dignified experience for the client."

In addition to the individual remarks and presentations, the summit bestowed first-time "Champions for Change" awards on Commissioner Shapiro and Barbara Wilhelmy, executive director of the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities. Shapiro was selected for his leadership and vision for a more coordinated, consumer-driven human services system, his unwavering support of YWH as an initiative to end homelessness and as a public-private partnership, and his welcoming approach and respect for philanthropic and nonprofit partners in the effort. Wilhelmy was selected for her leadership in helping establish the YWH Housing Resource Centers. Wilhelmy's organization runs the largest YWH Housing Resource Center serving the Greater Pottstown area.

The summit concluded with an address from nationally-recognized speaker, author and filmmaker David Burstein, who shared strategies for more effectively engaging the millennial generation in the effort to effect social change, and a call to action from Elizabeth Corredor, the regional director of housing programs for the Salvation Army of Norristown and of Pottstown.

### **About Your Way Home Montgomery County**

Your Way Home (YWH) Montgomery County is a public-private partnership dedicated to improving the housing stability, economic security and health of Montgomery County residents. For more information, visit: Your Way Home's website: [www.yourwayhome.org](http://www.yourwayhome.org).

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