



# NEWS

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## **Montco Eliminates Veteran Homelessness; Work Not Finished**

**Norristown, PA (January 8, 2016)** – Two years ago, Montgomery County undertook a program to eliminate homelessness among military veterans. Last September, to signify the final push toward that goal, the county commissioners signed “The Mayors’ Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness” by the end of 2015. Yesterday, Sean Halbom, director of the Montgomery County Office of Veterans’ Affairs, reported to the commissioners at their bimonthly meeting that the goal has been reached.

“This goal was as complex as it was aggressive, and our success in no way means we are finished,” Halbom told the commissioners. “What I can tell you today is that we have reached the ‘functional zero’ that we had hoped to achieve, and we now have in place a system that is capable of rapidly rehousing future homeless veterans.” He added that over the past two years the effort had affected 129 veterans and their families.

Josh Shapiro, chair of the commissioners, congratulated Halbom for “the great work” done by him and his staff, including Dr. Charmaine Ijeoma, Montgomery County’s Homeless Veteran Outreach Officer, who was once a homeless veteran herself.

Commissioners Val Arkoosh and Joseph Gale also hailed the news. “This is a perfect example of how here in Montgomery County we have made great strides tearing down the silos of government,” said Arkoosh, referring to how numerous agencies at the county, state, and federal levels had worked to reach the goal.

In addition to his office, Halbom said the hard work and dedication of numerous agencies, including the Veterans Multi-Service Center, the Coatesville VA Medical Center, Your Way Home, Montgomery

County Housing Authority, Montgomery County Workforce Investment Board, and the Coordinated Homeless Outreach Center, played important roles in reaching the “effective zero” goal.

Halbom said “functional zero” means that all veterans who were located and were willing to accept housing have been permanently housed, or are sheltered and on a path to permanent housing. It also means that in the future homelessness among veterans will be rare, brief, and non-recurring thanks to preventive measures taken to keep veterans from becoming homeless.

“I cannot stress enough that achieving functional zero does not mean our work is finished,” Halbom said. “We have merely found a remedy with which to treat the symptoms of homelessness among veterans.”