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Walla Walla One of 22 Communities in America Selected to Take Part in a First-of-its-kind National Study of Youth Homelessness

Walla Walla and 21 other communities across the United States will work with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago in partnership on Voices of Youth Count, a first-of-its-kind national effort aimed at ending youth homelessness.

“Children and youth experiencing homelessness face so many barriers to getting a quality education, which is why I’ve been leading efforts in the Senate to make sure these students get the support they need to learn, grow and thrive in the classroom and later in life,” said **Senator Patty Murray**, the ranking member on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. “It is vital to continue to learn more about how children and youth become homeless, and the specific challenges they face. Thanks to Voices for Youth Count’s data collection, we will help make progress in tackling youth homelessness through a comprehensive, coordinated response.”

Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago is a policy research center that provides public and private decision-makers with rigorous data analysis and achievable solutions to support them in improving the lives of society’s most vulnerable children, youth and families. Communities will work hand-in-hand with Chapin Hall’s Voices of Youth Count program to carry out youth-led counts and surveys of young people and providers of services to homeless youth. Common data collection methods across sites will allow first-ever site-to-site comparisons and scalable findings, enabling national estimates. A subset of



sites will conduct in-depth youth interviews. At all 22 sites, communities are actively engaged in planning activities.

Voices of Youth Count comes at a critical time for communities and Congress. Reliable data, new strategies and direct engagement have accelerated the nation's progress in preventing and ending veterans' homelessness in many communities, but efforts to end homelessness among young people, whose circumstances and needs are very different from homeless adults, have lacked coordination across communities and the focus that strong data can successfully support.

Data on youth homelessness has been inaccurate and tough to come by. For instance, in a 2015 tally in Detroit, only one unsheltered, unaccompanied youth under 18 was identified.

"It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of youth are homeless for a week or longer, and many more experience at least one night of homelessness per year," said **Senator Susan Collins**, chair of the Senate Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Subcommittee. "No child should be burdened with not knowing where they are going to sleep at night. Research initiatives like Voices of Youth Count, which survey runaway and homeless youth, can help policymakers address this complex issue by providing accurate, youth-specific data."

As findings emerge, Chapin Hall researchers will place data and evidence in local and national context, make purposeful connections between existing and new knowledge and policy, and provide decision makers at national and local levels with actionable information. The VoYC count will involve youth in the count itself and provide training and workshops prior to the count, as well as provider surveys after the count to see where there are gaps and strengths in local policies and services aimed at homeless youth and those at risk of becoming homeless.

"Leaders from Philadelphia to Walla Walla, Washington have expressed a need for answers," said Bryan Samuels, Executive Director of Chapin Hall. "By working collectively – and by using new ways to count and to listen to youth – we will build knowledge about how to end the cycle of youth homelessness."

Voices of Youth Count is funded by a growing group of investors dedicated to the creation, dissemination and use of rigorous knowledge to prevent and end youth homelessness. The funding effort is grounded in a catalytic approach, shared vision, and dual focus on national and local solutions. Members include **Ballmer Group Philanthropy, Champion Foundation, Casey Family Programs, Chapin Hall, Elton John AIDS Foundation, the Melville Charitable Trust, and Raikes Foundation.**

Chapin Hall's Executive Director Bryan Samuels announced the partnership with the 22 communities at the National Network for Youth Conference in Washington, D.C. Chapin Hall selected and recruited Voices of Youth Count communities using a rigorous sampling methodology aimed at ensuring diversity of region, population density, and the availability of services for homeless youth.

For more, please visit www.voicesofyouthcount.org and www.chapinhall.org.

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