



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Homeless student count numbers announced

Community leaders highlight need for service

Portland, Ore., July 7, 2009: A report released by Portland Public Schools found at least 1,706 PPS students experienced homelessness during the 2008-09 school year. The report included students living in shelters or transitional housing, outdoors, and temporary dwellings such as hotels. The findings warrant increased awareness of youth services, and present opportunities for citizens to get involved.

At noon today, Portland City Commissioner Nick Fish and Multnomah County Commissioner Deborah Kafoury joined Portland School Board member Martín González to address the report, and serve nutritious meals to youth at Peninsula Park, 700 N. Rosa Parks Way.

Nick Fish, the Commissioner-in-Charge of both housing services and parks, acknowledged the increasing need for youth-focused programs. "Our economic challenges are daunting, but to let children bear the brunt of them is unconscionable," says Commissioner Fish, adding, "we can and must step forward to provide a safety net for our children."

The decades old program highlighted today - coordinated by Portland Public Schools and Portland Parks and Recreation - served more than 4,000 lunches

each day last summer. That number is expected to increase because of the region's economic challenges and increased unemployment.

PPS Director González stated, "For some Portland children, school is the only place to get a nutritious meal. The summer lunch program ensures that our students continue to receive a healthy lunch, even as they enjoy a break from their studies."

"So many families in our community are hurting and in need of basic services like food and housing" noted Multnomah County Commissioner Kafoury. "We're here to highlight available programs and urge the community to join us in solving this crisis."

With more youth accessing programs, demand for community involvement intensifies. By volunteering to serve free meals or for other services, community members can support homeless families and their children. Individuals and businesses can also pledge financial support to homeless youth by donating to the United Way Community Relief Fund (www.unitedway-pdx.org/)

To learn more about where the meals are located, how to volunteer, or where to make a financial contribution, visit www.portlandonline.com/bettertogether or call (503) 823-4000. The service also provides information for families in need of general assistance.

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At Portland Public Schools, this is our goal: By the end of elementary, middle, and high school, every student by name will meet or exceed academic standards and will be fully prepared to make productive life decisions. Portland Public Schools is an equal opportunity educator and employer.