

Thank you, members of the DuPage County Board, for your commitment to insure the quality of life here in DuPage County.

As Chairman Cronin said, I am Carol Simler President/CEO of DuPage Pads. This morning, I stand together with the other providers of Shelter and Support for the men, women and children who are homeless in our county. Karen Ayala, Executive Director DuPage County Health Department, Lisa Horne, Director of Safer Living, Metropolitan Family Shelter; Christine Lewis, Executive Director of Midwest Shelter for Veterans; Harley Jones, CEO, 360 Youth Services; and Mary Keating Director of DuPage County Community Services. Today we stand together to renew our commitment to end homelessness here in DuPage County.

On December 21<sup>st</sup> on the winter solstice, the first day of winter and the longest night of the year, we will take pause to remember the 5 individuals who were members of our community who died while experiencing the shocking inhumanity of homelessness.

This year we will gather with volunteers and clients on December 21<sup>st</sup> at all three of the DuPagePads overnight shelter sites to remember those who have died this year without a permanent home. Our goal is to commemorate the lives of those who died while being homeless, who died from illnesses or conditions directly related to their homelessness. For many, this service will be the only commemoration of their lives.

The causes of homelessness are complex, and we are aware of the impact that homelessness has on our community and the cost to our municipal budgets. The fact remains that a lack of housing people can afford is unhealthy, traumatizing and significantly shortens an individual's life expectancy. People experiencing homeless have an average life expectancy of around 50 years almost 20 years lower than the housed population.

We need to invest in our shared humanity through investment in affordable housing. We need to continue to build healthier and more compassionate communities that ensure all residents basic human needs are met. Today and every day in this county, we invite you and members of our community

to help us engage unsheltered individuals in our community to provide support and needed services by calling our Toll-Free number 866.682.3846 x2275 listed on the flyer at your place.

When you call this number, we will ask for information about the individual and then send members of our Street Outreach Team to engage these individuals with the goal of moving them to a better place.

In this season of generosity and sharing, let us call to mind our DuPage County citizens who are less prosperous, living in poverty, and without homes; particularly during these winter months that pose extreme hardships and challenges.

May this Homeless Memorial Day be a reminder to all of us that working together, we can build our housing infrastructure and reinforce our safety net of food, medical and housing assistance so we don't lose another person to becoming homeless in our County.

Homelessness should never become a fact of life here in DuPage County.

I'm asking you members of the county board to be the hope that people seek.

Join us on December 21st, by remembering all those who have died homeless as we honor their lives by working to provide solutions to end homelessness in our county. Stand with us that night – because I believe, and I think you will agree, that in OUR community every life matters.

Thank you!