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CONTACT: Caroline Shook
Executive Director, Housing Opportunities
(219) 548-2800 ext 209

For immediate release: *Release of Groundbreaking Plan to End Homelessness for Porter County promotes community involvement in solutions to homelessness*

VALPARAISO – Faced with an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness and a system strained doing what it can to address the issue, service providers, shelter and housing providers, community members, faith-based organizations and funders have created a Plan to End Homelessness for Porter County.

This groundbreaking plan, *No Place Like Home*, lays a foundation to retool and refine the Porter County homeless service delivery system to most effectively prevent homelessness and rapidly re-house people who are experiencing homelessness. The plan's vision is that all residents will have access to a safe, affordable home in Porter County including resources and support services necessary to prevent and end homelessness.

Homelessness is a growing challenge in Porter County, Indiana. In January 2011, 154 adults and 75 children were experiencing homelessness, nearly 1 in 5 of them had been homeless for longer than three months and 15 percent report they have experienced homelessness more than one time. Far more county residents are risk of becoming homeless, with 10,673 individuals in Porter County living below the poverty line. In addition a growing share of renters is paying rents that are unaffordable based on their incomes: In 2009, 12.8 percent of all renter households were paying over 30% of their income toward rent.

The Porter County Coalition for Affordable Housing has taken the lead in creating this plan. Barb Young, President of the Porter County Community Foundation said, "We are part of the coalition because homelessness is a serious issue for Porter County and we want to be able to develop effective and efficient programs to address the need. It will take everyone working together to really solve the problem." Sharon Kish, President of United Way of Porter County, is promoting the plan and said, "It is essential to have a coordinated, comprehensive strategy to end homelessness. Delivering the appropriate services, support and housing to people in need improves the quality of life for those families and for our entire community."

No Place Like Home includes proven strategies to ending homelessness:

- **Increase Access to Stable and Affordable Housing:** Incorporate a Housing First approach at every possible opportunity, increase inventory and access to permanent supportive housing and more broadly affordable housing.
- **Focus on Homelessness Prevention:** The most cost effective way to address homelessness is to prevent it from ever happening to an individual or family. Expand outreach and service delivery to households at risk of becoming homeless.
- **Increase Economic Security:** Increase earning potential for households at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness, tearing down the barriers that block households from their greatest earning potential.
- **Improve Health and Stability:** Coordinate better access to physical and mental health care systems to improve quality of life and increase stability.
- **Increase Leadership, Collaboration and Civic Engagement:** Full engagement across the spectrum of community stakeholders ensures the effective implementation of this Plan.
- **Retool the Homeless Crisis Response System:** Porter County is committed to developing one front door process through which all households can enter. It will also focus its programs on rapid re-housing, and it will promote greater participation in the Homeless Management Information System to better assess the populations at risk and retool programs and processes to best meet the County's needs.

Porter County's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, *No Place Like Home*, was released at a public presentation on January 30 at Ivy Tech Valparaiso. The complete plan will be available online as of January 31 from the Porter County Community Foundation at www.portercountyfoundation.org and United Way of Porter County at www.unitedwaypc.org.

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The Social IMPACT Research Center (IMPACT) was commissioned to develop and write Porter County's Plan to End Homelessness (the Plan). IMPACT used a dynamic, interactive approach to develop the Plan in order to engage and get feedback from a broad range of perspectives throughout the community, including homeless provider experts, business and political leaders, local foundation leaders and people at-risk of or experiencing homelessness in the county. For more information please visit www.heartlandalliance.org/research.