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Covenant House Florida 'Sleep Out' Raises \$257,000 for Homeless Youth

Covenant House Florida's annual Sleep Out for Homeless Youth raised \$257,000 – \$184,000 in Fort Lauderdale and \$73,000 in Orlando – in support of the nonprofit's mission of providing shelter and services to homeless youth and young adults.

Each volunteer "sleeper" had dinner with the homeless residents at the shelter, participated in a moving round table discussion with the kids, and then proceeded outside, cardboard box and sleeping bag in hand, to sleep on the pavement. Prior to the event, participants raised funds in support of their sleep out effort by reaching out to family, friends and colleagues who made donations through individualized online portals. A total of 64 community leaders slept out – 40 in Fort Lauderdale and 24 in Orlando.

"We're very grateful to each person who took the time to participate in our Sleep Out," said James M. Gress, Covenant House Florida executive director. "These folks did much more than raise funds for our important cause – they also agreed to experience, in a small way, what it's like to be homeless. We applaud and thank all of our 'sleepers' for standing with the homeless young people we serve."

In Fort Lauderdale, a \$75,000 match provided by The Salah Foundation was integral to the success of the fundraising efforts.

"The \$75,000 match was obviously important in and of itself, but it also spurred additional and larger contributions because donors recognized their gift would be doubled," said Gress. "We offer a heartfelt thanks to The Salah Foundation and Salah Foundation board member George Taylor for this generous donation."

In Orlando, prior to its successful Sleep Out, the shelter hosted the Covenant House International Candlelight Vigil for Homeless Youth. The Vigil attracted several hundred youth and community members who walked in procession from the Cathedral Church of St. Luke to the Walt Disney Amphitheater at Lake Eola Park. A moving program, including music, inspiring words from teens and supporters, and candle lighting ceremony, took place at the amphitheatre.

The Sleep Out for Homeless Youth is a nationwide initiative designed to raise awareness and funds for Covenant House facilities across the country during National Hunger and Homeless

Awareness Month. Across North America this year, a total of 1,000 participants slept out and raised \$6 million at 16 Covenant House shelters.

Covenant House Florida provides shelter and services to homeless, runaway, at-risk and trafficked youth up to age 21, including young moms and their babies. With facilities in Fort Lauderdale and Orlando, Covenant House Florida is one of the largest providers of services for homeless youth in the state. To sign up for next year's Sleep Out, please contact Elisa Stone at 954-568-7914 or ESTone@CovenantHouseFL.org.

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Photo IDs:

A – The team from Navigant, which included Hector Artze, Covenant House Florida board member Jan Vrins and Monique Libier, raised more than \$22K for Covenant House Florida.

B – Covenant House Florida board member Susan Selimos and Claudio Noriega from the Accenture team.

C – Bill Lewis (left) was the highest individual fundraiser bringing in more than \$20K. He is pictured with Keith Richman and Covenant House Florida board member Jeff Richman.

D - Cindy Schutt has participated in the Sleep Out for 4 years in a row.

E – Amy Piper from team AmEx

F – Covenant House Florida's Elisa Stone with Fred Johnson

G – Jim Gress, Covenant House Florida executive director, slept out in Fort Lauderdale as well as Orlando.

H - Linda Wood from Broward College

I - Troy McHatton

J – The group of Fort Lauderdale sleepers pictured with Covenant House Florida residents.