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## **DuPage Residents Fight Homelessness One Sleeping Bag At A Time**

*Nearly 2,000 Sleep Out Saturday participants  
to raise money for homeless neighbors Nov. 5*

**Glen Ellyn, IL, August 25, 2011** -- This fall, with the U.S. credit rating crisis headlining news across the country, keeping a job, paying the mortgage and staying out of debt continues to be on everyone's minds. DuPage residents are no exception. Despite living in the wealthiest county in Illinois, DuPage County experienced a 20% increase in foreclosures last year and ranked 9 out of 102 counties in number of foreclosures.

For the eighth year in a row, Bridge Communities, a not-for-profit transitional housing program, is organizing a county-wide event to raise money for and awareness of homeless families in DuPage County. On Saturday, November 5, approximately 2,000 of DuPage residents will sleep outside during "Sleep Out Saturday". This year's event will feature approximately 75 outdoor sleep out sites in DuPage yards and parking lots, with adults and students sleeping in boxes, tents and cars. The 22-year-old organization hopes to spread the message that even one "sleeper" can make a change in the life of a DuPage family needing a place to call home.

"Sleep Out Saturday" will kick off with an outdoor rally in downtown Glen Ellyn (505 Crescent Blvd.) at 7 pm. The rally will feature music, video, and live testimonials from Bridge Communities clients. The rally is free and open to the public.

Last year, "Sleep Out Saturday" raised over \$100,000 for Bridge Communities' programs which serve more than 100 families annually in their

transitional housing and shared-equity homeownership programs. The organization's services also include life-skills mentoring, an auto program, financial counseling and employment training. With clients having an even harder time staying employed and making ends meet, Bridge Communities has increased the services it provides to them.

Understanding the importance of financial support to Bridge Communities' effort against homelessness, some participants took their fundraising to another level. Last year, Brittney Wells participated in the event for the first time by sleeping out in her Naperville backyard with her family. Despite the fact that Brittney was only eight years old, she raised over \$1,000 for Bridge Communities on her own. "I really enjoy it and wanted to donate money to help families without a home," she said. "I really like to help people."

Rachel Bahr, the Director of Youth Ministry of First Congregational Church in Glen Ellyn, wanted her students to put their money where their mouths were. "I didn't want kids to just come and not really understand why it was a big deal," she said. Last year, Bahr encouraged all participants to raise at least \$100. She found that the fundraising supplemented the overall emotional experience of the event.

Anyone is invited to participate in Sleep Out Saturday or to make a contribution. Just one person is powerful enough to make a change. Please also text the word "Bridge" to 20222 to donate \$10 which will be added to your next mobile bill.

For more information on Sleep Out Saturday, to participate, or to sponsor a "sleeper", call (630) 545-0610 or visit. [www.sleepoutsaturday.org](http://www.sleepoutsaturday.org). Check out Sleep Out Saturday on Facebook too.

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