



## **MEDIA ADVISORY/REQUEST FOR COVERAGE**

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### **PITTSBURGH MERCY'S CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE TO REMEMBER PERSONS WHO DIED WHILE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN 2020** *Annual public vigil set for December 21, winter solstice & longest night of the year*

WHAT: [Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net](#)<sup>®</sup>, an innovative, award-winning medical and social service outreach program for persons experiencing homelessness, will hold its annual memorial service to remember the 11 individuals who are known to have died while experiencing homelessness in Allegheny County in 2020. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions for gatherings, and careful consideration and direction from the Allegheny County Health Department, there will not be a group service this year.

WHO: Pittsburgh Mercy colleagues and other providers have been invited to join staff members from [Pittsburgh Mercy](#) and [Bethlehem Haven](#) who will be on hand throughout the day; partners Allegheny County Department of Human Services, City of Pittsburgh, and Allegheny Health Network; and our persons served and others who are concerned about social justice for persons experiencing homelessness.

WHEN: **Monday, December 21, 2017, from 12 to 8 p.m.**  
This year's observance take place over eight hours to prevent a large gathering from occurring. December 21 is the first day of winter, the winter solstice, and the longest night of the year. It is also National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day.

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**WHERE: Fort Pitt Boulevard at Grant Street, Downtown Pittsburgh**

There, beneath a busy highway overpass, a memorial wall of bronze plaques commemorates the 170\* individuals who are known to have died while homeless in Allegheny County since 1989. Face coverings and social distancing will be mandatory while visiting. A guest book will be provided to sign and there will be an opportunity to say a few words for a video being compiled for Pittsburgh Mercy's social media pages.

*\*This number is subject to change between now and December 21.*

**WHY:** Each year on December 21 – the first day of winter, the winter solstice, and the longest night of the year – the [National Coalition for the Homeless](#) and homeless service providers throughout the United States host public events to call attention to the plight of people who have died while experiencing homelessness. Pittsburgh is among more than 100 U.S. cities to take part in National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day observances.

According to the National Healthcare for the Homeless Council, the average age of death for a person experiencing homelessness is 50 years, compared to 78 years for a person who is not homeless.

[Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net](#)<sup>®</sup>, a member of [Trinity Health](#), serving in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy, has organized a public vigil in Pittsburgh every year since 1998.

### ***About Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net<sup>®</sup>***

[Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net](#)<sup>®</sup> is an award-winning, innovative medical and social service outreach program for the unsheltered homeless population in Allegheny County. It strives to address the circumstances which undermine the behavioral and physical health of persons served by creating avenues for people who are homeless to access the medical and social services that are necessary for them to improve their quality of life. Since its founding in 1992, Operation Safety Net has reached approximately 10,000 homeless individuals with more than 68,000 visits where they live – in camps along riverbanks, in alleyways, or beneath bridges and highway overpasses – and has successfully helped more than 1,400 individuals who were once homeless to find homes of their own. In doing so, Operation Safety Net not only assists with providing health care and affordable housing, but also offers this vulnerable population hope, dignity, and a sense of community. Operation Safety Net is part of [Pittsburgh Mercy](#) and [Trinity Health](#), serving in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy. To learn more or to make a donation in support of Operation Safety Net's important work in the community, visit [www.pittsburghmercy.org](http://www.pittsburghmercy.org).

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***About Pittsburgh Mercy***

[Pittsburgh Mercy](#) is a person-centered, population-based, trauma-informed community health and wellness provider and the region's only Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC). We reach out and offer help — and hope — to some of our communities most vulnerable populations: people who have physical and behavioral health challenges; intellectual disabilities; and people who are experiencing addiction, homelessness, abuse, and other forms of trauma. Our mission is to be a compassionate and transforming, healing presence within our communities. Pittsburgh Mercy is a member of [Trinity Health](#) and serves in the tradition of the [Sisters of Mercy](#). With annual operating revenue of \$110 million, Pittsburgh Mercy is one of the largest health and human service nonprofit organizations and employers in Southwestern Pennsylvania. We serve more than 33,000 people annually in 60+ locations and employ 1,400 colleagues. For more information or to make a donation in support of our mission, please visit [www.pittsburghmercy.org](http://www.pittsburghmercy.org).

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