



MEDIA ADVISORY/REQUEST FOR COVERAGE

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**PITTSBURGH MERCY'S OPERATION SAFETY NET®
HOSTS CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE
TO REMEMBER PERSONS WHO DIED
WHILE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN 2016**

Annual public vigil set for December 21, winter solstice & longest night of the year

WHAT: [Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net®](#), an innovative, award-winning medical and social service outreach program for persons experiencing homelessness, invites the public to attend its annual candlelight memorial service to remember the individuals who are known to have died while experiencing homelessness in Allegheny County in 2016. The service will include a reading of the names, brief remarks, musical selections, and a prayer.

WHO: The public is invited to join [Pittsburgh Mercy](#), [Bethlehem Haven](#), and [Northside Common Ministries' Pleasant Valley Men's Shelter](#) leadership, physicians, nurses, care managers, social workers, volunteers, community partners, and others who are concerned about social justice for persons experiencing homelessness.

WHEN: **Wednesday, December 21, 2016, at 7 p.m.**
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.
(Editor's note: The service will conclude by 7:30 p.m.)

WHERE: **Fort Pitt Boulevard at Grant Street, Downtown Pittsburgh**
There, beneath a busy highway overpass, a memorial wall of bronze plaques commemorates the 142 individuals who are known to have died while homeless in Allegheny County since 1989.

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Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net hosts candlelight memorial service to remember persons who died while experiencing homelessness in 2016

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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](#)[®], part of [Trinity Health](#), serving in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy, has organized a public vigil in Pittsburgh every year since 1998.

Donations of new men's and women's hats, gloves, boots, and thermal underwear will be collected for distribution to individuals at the Winter Shelter. Monetary donations in support of the shelter and Operation Safety Net's important work in the community are welcome at www.pittsburghmercy.org. When making a donation online, please designate the gift for Operation Safety Net. For more information about giving opportunities, please contact Pittsburgh Mercy Development at Development@pittsburghmercy.org or 724-934-3537.

***About Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net*[®]**

[Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net](#)[®] is an innovative, award-winning medical and social service outreach program to persons experiencing homelessness in Allegheny County. It strives to address the circumstances which undermine the mental and physical health of persons experiencing homeless by creating avenues for them to access the medical and social services necessary to improve 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 Mercy Community Health, [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.

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About Pittsburgh Mercy

[Pittsburgh Mercy](#) , a part of [Trinity Health](#) and serving in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy, is one of the region's largest health and social service nonprofits and also one of its largest employers. Pittsburgh Mercy includes Bethlehem Haven, McAuley Ministries, Mercy Behavioral Health, Mercy Community Health, Mercy Intellectual Disabilities Services, Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program, Operation Safety Net®, and Pittsburgh Mercy Family Health Center. Together, these Pittsburgh Mercy programs and 1,700 employees serve more than 33,000 individuals annually at more than 60 locations in Southwestern Pennsylvania. To learn more about Pittsburgh Mercy or to make a donation in support of its important work in the community, visit www.pittsburghmercy.org.

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