FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DECEMBER 17, 2013

CONTACT: PAUL LaLONDE
(630) 882-6970

ANNE ENGELHARDT
(630) 553-5073

VOLUNTARY ACTION CENTER AND KENDALL COUNTY PADS WORK TOGETHER FOR TRANSPORTATION OF HOMELESS GUESTS TO AND FROM SHELTERS

The Voluntary Action Center (VAC) and Kendall County PADS are excited to announce a partnership to bring transportation to PADS’ homeless guests! VAC is the non-profit operator of Kendall Area Transit (KAT), the County’s community and public transit program.

Paul LaLonde, Director of KAT, said he’s glad the two sides have come together to assist the County’s homeless population. “PADS and VAC have been in discussions for a long time now, and we’re happy to finally have a partnership in place.” LaLonde continued, “This partnership is really a no-brainer. I think it took longer than normal to develop because both PADS and KAT began at the same time, and there was a lot of uncertainty about how each program would function. Both were new and entering uncharted waters, so to speak.” KAT and PADS became operational in 2010 and have experienced tremendous growth.

Public Action to Deliver Shelter, or PADS, is a countywide program launched with the idea that homeless need a place to stay overnight and receive meals, particularly during the colder fall, winter, and spring months. Similar programs have been ongoing in DuPage and Grundy Counties, and a PADS program through the Hesed House shelter in Aurora is recognized as one of the first such programs in the United States. In a PADS program, sites such as churches serve as overnight shelters, with a different site each night of the week, for a period of time. Some PADS programs are year-round, but many, such as the Kendall County program, are seasonal.


Anne Engelhardt, Executive Director of PADS, says that transportation has been a real challenge for PADS guests given the considerable distance between shelter sites and that many guests don’t have a personal vehicle. PADS guests go to the shelter site at 7:00 p.m. and leave at 7:00 a.m. PADS has worked with other area businesses and social service agencies to provide services to their homeless guests, many of whom use the shelters all season. “We have worked closely with the YMCA in Oswego where our guests can take a hot shower, the local libraries to provide opportunities to search for jobs, and local laundromats where they can do some laundry,” Engelhardt said.
The transportation agreement between VAC and PADS has KAT buses arriving at each shelter church site in the morning Monday through Friday. Any PADS guests needing to use the bus will then be taken to a designated drop off point where they can take a shower, to research for jobs, or stay warm. Many of these locations are designated Kendall County warming centers, or partner agencies. “We decided on locations that offered our guests opportunities to improve their situation, whether that’s through employment services, cleaning up, or just having a warm place to stay.” A bus will return each evening to a designated location and bring those needing a ride to the next shelter. KAT does not operate on the weekends, so Engelhardt mentioned PADS has been making other arrangements to cover Saturday and Sunday transport, including drivers.

In addition, VAC staff has offered to provide travel training assistance to PADS volunteers and guests. LaLonde said that travel training teaches people how to use the bus system. “It seems simple, and it is in many respects, but occasionally it can take time for new riders to catch onto the little nuances and rules about using KAT. We just want to do our part to help Kendall’s homeless population discover skills and advance towards a better situation.” The training will assist the homeless who are encouraged to use KAT for their personal business or to and from work.

VAC was incorporated in 1974 in DeKalb County. It operates transportation and nutrition programs in DeKalb and LaSalle Counties, and in 2010 expanded to operate the new KAT program in a partnership with Kendall County. The KAT program offers community and public transportation service to all Kendall County residents but is particularly vital to seniors and individuals with disabilities. More information can be found at the following website: [www.co.kendall.il.us/kendall-area-transit](http://www.co.kendall.il.us/kendall-area-transit).

Anne and Paul feel hopeful that the new arrangement will better the situation of the PADS guests, but both know there is more work to be done. “We are always looking for volunteers. We have had hundreds of volunteers that have made the PADS program a success, but it gets tough to donate one’s time given personal commitments.” She also mentioned that volunteers don’t do it for publicity or any thanks, even though all are certainly deserving. Information about PADS and volunteering can be found on the website [www.kendallcares.org](http://www.kendallcares.org).

LaLonde said both VAC and PADS face the same challenge, that of limited resources, whether that’s financial and equipment. “There is never enough funding, never enough buses,” he said, “which is all the more reason our partnership makes sense. We’re stronger for having pooled scarce resources.”

For more information on PADS, or if you wish to become a volunteer, please contact PADS Executive Director, Anne Engelhardt, (630) 553-5073. For more information on VAC or KAT, contact KAT Director, Paul LaLonde, (630)882-6970.

###