

MEDIA ALERT

Contact

Dan D'Ippolito

207-775-0026 x1116

communications@preblestreet.org



Portland gathers for Homeless Persons' Memorial Vigil

Annual commemoration honors those who have died

PORTLAND, ME (December 19, 2018) — A vigil to remember friends from the Greater Portland homeless community who have died begins at **4:30pm** on **Friday, December 21** in the courtyard of the **Preble Street Resource Center**, on the corner of Preble and Portland Streets.

Portland's Annual Homeless Persons' Memorial Vigil takes place on the winter solstice, the longest night of homelessness all year. For 24 years, Portlanders have gathered on the evening of the winter solstice to mourn lives that were cut short, and to reaffirm a commitment to ensuring that everyone who needs a home finds one.

"The life expectancy of our friends who endure chronic homelessness is 28 years shorter, on average, than that of people who are housed. The human toll of allowing these vulnerable neighbors to slip through the cracks is devastating, not only to those of us who knew and loved the 36 people we've lost so far this year, but to our community as a whole," said Donna Yellen, acting Preble Street Executive Director.

The gathered crowd will proceed by candlelight accompanied by a bagpiper to Monument Square for a commemoration ceremony. Renee Fay-LeBlanc, Chief Medical Officer at Greater Portland Health, as well as two people who have experienced homelessness, will offer remarks, followed by the lighting of candles to honor each member of the homeless community who has died in the past year.

The public is encouraged to assemble at the Preble Street Resource Center at 4:30pm for the street procession, or at Monument Square at 4:45pm when the ceremony begins.

The annual event is sponsored by the City of Portland Health and Human Services Department, Greater Portland Health, Maine Medical Center, Mercy Hospital, and Preble Street.

###