



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: Wednesday, October 20, 2021

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San Antonio Homeless Service Community Mourns the Loss of William Hawkins

SAN ANTONIO (October 20, 2021) – Last week, on the morning of Thursday, October 14th, William Hawkins was shot dead in broad daylight outside a gas station in downtown San Antonio. It was an unacceptable, tragic end to the life of someone loved by so many.

William, 35, was well-known and cared for by various nonprofit organizations and homeless service providers. William was experiencing what is known as chronic homelessness, defined as being unhoused over a year (or repeatedly) while struggling with mental illness or another disabling condition. However, that is only part of his story.

William was a friend to many with a family that loved him dearly, now heartbroken with grief. William wasn't always on the streets. He grew up on the city's northwest side, attending Hobby Middle School and Clark High School in his youth. At one point, he had a job and his own place to stay. Brittney Ackerson, who previously managed a staffing company that employed William and is currently a Street Outreach Specialist with Corazón San Antonio, reflects, "The William I knew was a helpful soul, a protector, that cared for other people. He would often take people to work, share his food, and offer his place to stay. He was very much like a big brother or father figure. In every interaction I had with William, he was a soft-spoken, kind, tolerant, helpful individual."

As we grieve, we are left to ask why such a gentle soul was taken so soon. William's death should not be in vain, nor should it be overlooked, forgotten, or viewed as less important because he was experiencing homelessness. There is no excuse to take harmful action, much less use deadly force, when approached or asked for money by an unhoused, unarmed individual.

We understand that the San Antonio Police Department needs to perform a full investigation into this incident. During this process, we feel responsible, as the trained experts working with this community daily, to share the appropriate response when approached by someone experiencing homelessness or a mental health crisis. Do not feel obligated to give money or food. You can always walk or drive away if you feel uncomfortable. While many people on the streets could use someone to talk to, it is often best to leave it to the professionals. If you are concerned for the person's well-being, call 3-1-1 for a district outreach worker to be dispatched for a welfare check and ensure they are connected to available resources.



Alliance to House Everyone

Homelessness is complicated to solve, and much work is needed to address this issue in our community. Various challenges can lead to homelessness, often disproportionately impacting communities of color, including systemic issues in our criminal justice, healthcare, and foster care systems. We must continue working across our community to address the problems of inequity that cause homelessness downstream. There is also a tremendous need locally to develop affordable housing and permanent supportive housing options with onsite mental health services as a long-term solution for unsheltered homelessness.

If you are concerned about homelessness in our community, consider helping the homeless service providers dedicated to working toward solutions. Volunteering your time, making an in-kind or monetary donation, or sharing our messaging on social media channels will go a long way to accelerate our progress to ensure everyone has a place to call home in San Antonio and Bexar County.

This **Thursday, October 21st, at 10 AM**, a memorial service will be held outside of Christian Assistance Ministry on 110 McCullough Ave, San Antonio, TX 78215. We invite the community to come together, joining family and friends, to celebrate the life of William Hawkins.

We want to thank Christian Assistance Ministry, SAMMinistries, Corazón San Antonio, Centro San Antonio, and Haven for Hope for their assistance in crafting this message and standing aligned to advocate for the most vulnerable members of our community.

For SARAH interview requests or comments, contact Billy Mahone, Director of Community Engagement, at 210-413-5513 or billymahone@sarahomeless.org. For CAM interview requests or comments, contact Dawn White-Fosdick, President/CEO, at 210-563-1877 or dwhite@cam-sa.org.

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About SARAH: SARAH is the lead Continuum of Care (CoC) agency for San Antonio and Bexar County. As the CoC, SARAH secures and distributes funding for direct service providers in the housing and homeless community and provides guidance to strengthen policies and programs. SARAH is responsible for collaborating with, listening to, and collecting data from our partner network to ensure everyone has a place to call home. For more information, visit sarahomeless.org.

About CAM: Just like a triage or emergency room, folks come to CAM in all sorts of crises. No appointment is necessary, and all are welcome. CAM provides many items to meet clients' immediate physical needs while also addressing the needs of the mind and soul. CAM is also a vital connection for clients who need long-term support by providing referrals and advocating for the client to other nonprofits and/or government agencies. For more information, visit christianassistanceministry.org.

South Alamo Regional Alliance for the Homeless

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