



***Touro College  
Graduate School of Social Work***

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***FOR RELEASE***

**STUDENTS AND FACULTY FROM TOURO COLLEGE'S GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF SOCIAL WORK TAKE PART IN NYC HOMELESS OUTREACH  
POPULATION ESTIMATE (HOPE) FOR THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR**

New York, N.Y., February 3, 2011 – For the third consecutive year, a group of students and professors from the Graduate School of Social Work at Touro College joined forces with more than 3,000 volunteers to help survey the number of people currently living unsheltered in the city.

The Touro volunteers were part of a group that recently ventured out after midnight to canvass parks, subways, and other public spaces as part of the New York City Department of Homeless Services' (DHS) Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE).

The information gathered by HOPE volunteers is critical to the DHS's ongoing efforts to help homeless people leave the streets for a better life, according to Professor Elhanan Marvit, MSW, LCSW, coordinator of the Brooklyn Division, Graduate School of Social Work at Touro College. Professor Marvit participated in the canvassing project with his colleague, Professor Allison Bobick, MSW, LCSW, Director of Student Advancement.

“Participating in the HOPE survey fits in with the core philosophy of both Touro College and the Graduate School of Social Work, one of *tikkun olam*, ' or making the world a more just place,” said Professor Marvit. “It also enables our students to see firsthand what we discuss in class.”

Students, faculty, and volunteers who participated were Annalene Antonio, executive assistant to Graduate School of Social Work Dean Steven Huberman; Natalia Shtompel; Vera Bisikalo; Stephanie Surkin; Diana Tonkonog; Vera Tsikhanouskaya; and Esti Marcus. Also participating was Ritshell Verdier, an associate of Ms. Antonio's.

“We appreciate Touro College's volunteer spirit,” said Seth Diamond, NYC DHS commissioner. “By coming out and being the eyes and ears of the City for a night, they are making an investment in New York City's homeless individuals. As future social workers, their commitment tonight is a demonstration of their promise. ”

The Touro College volunteers canvassed at a location in midtown Manhattan. Volunteers approached people they encountered to determine if they were experiencing unsheltered homelessness by asking a series of survey questions. People identified as homeless were then asked how many years they've been homeless, where they sleep, and where they take their meals. The volunteers also distributed outreach cards printed with important phone numbers for DHS, and offered transportation by van to homeless shelters.

Touro College's Graduate School of Social Work's Master of Social Work program is designed to train clinical social work practitioners to awaken and enliven the innate ability of individuals, families, groups and communities to learn to meet their own needs and sustain their own state of equilibrium, thereby enhancing human well-being. The program meets all academic requirements for both social work licenses: LMSW (Licensed Master Social Worker) and LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker).

*Touro is a system of Jewish-sponsored non-profit institutions of higher and professional education. Touro College was established in 1971 primarily to enrich the Jewish heritage, and to serve the larger American community. More than 18,000 students are currently enrolled in its various schools and divisions. Touro College has branch campuses, locations and instructional sites in the New York area, as well as branch campuses and programs in Berlin, Jerusalem, Moscow, Paris, and Florida. Touro University California and its Nevada branch campus, as well as Touro College Los Angeles, are separately accredited institutions governed in common by the same Board of Trustees as Touro College. For further information on Touro College, please go to: <http://www.touro.edu/media/>.*

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For the third consecutive year, students, faculty and volunteers from the Touro Graduate School of Social Work participated in the city's annual homeless outreach population estimate on the evening of Monday, January 31, 2011. The participants gathered at P.S. 116 – The Mary Lindley Murray School on East 33<sup>rd</sup> Street in Manhattan - before heading out to assist in the effort to estimate the city's homeless population. Standing, from left: volunteer Ritshell Verdier; Natalia Shtompel; Professor Elhanan Marvit; Vera Tsikhanouskaya; New York City Department of Homeless Services Commissioner Seth Diamond; Diana Tonkonog; Esti Marcus; and Stephanie Surkin. Front row: Annalene Antonio, executive assistant to Graduate School of Social Work Dean Steven Huberman, and Vera Bisikalo.