



*Shelter & Supportive Housing \* Children's Alliance Center/CASA \* 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Learning Center  
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## **PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release**

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**Date:** Wednesday, February 02, 2011

**Re:** **Opportunity House Offers Shelter to Greater Reading's Homeless Population**

*Reading, PA* - Over twenty-seven years ago, when Opportunity House first opened its doors in Reading, the goal was to provide shelter and food to those members of our community who were in need and homeless. The agency continues to grow with the needs of the community, but, never loses sight of the original mission. During the winter months when temperatures and weather conditions are freezing and life threatening, Opportunity House still opens its doors and welcomes those in need. This program is known as "Code Blue". Without the benefits of "Code Blue", there would be many, many more people living on the streets, under the bridges and in abandoned homes in Reading and around Berks County. The program helps people and saves lives.

It has been an exceptionally harsh winter (January specifically) and the agency has been providing shelter for about 40 individuals in the Code Blue program. This is added to our year-round shelter and housing programs which include more than 120 single individuals and family members. The Code Blue program begins in the fall once the temperature drops below 35 or so degrees. It continues through April 1 (assuming the nights continue to get warmer). In Fiscal Year 2010 (July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010) Opportunity House served a total of 135 men and 19 women through Code Blue, alone. We averaged 33 unduplicated Code Blue clients per month. Through this program the agency offers shelter, clothing (if needed), meals at no cost, an opportunity to shower and other programs if individuals choose to accept them.

If you drive through Reading, it is rare to spot a homeless person on the street, sleeping on benches or sewer grates. This is due significantly to the Code Blue program that has been in existence for as long as the agency has been in Berks County. Code Blue and many of our programs exist through the support of the community. **Because we do not receive any funding from the City of Reading, Berks County, or United Way for the Code Blue program, we must rely on the support of our donors to ensure this vital and potentially life saving service takes place each year.**

### *Our Mission:*

*Opportunity House* is a multi-service organization improving the quality of life for children, families and adults who face various obstacles to independent living. With a primary goal to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency our services include the first 24-7 Learning Center in the State, emergency, transitional and permanent housing, and, the Children's Alliance Center/CASA (CAC) providing services to children who have been sexually abused.