The number of people experiencing homelessness in the U.S. is abysmally high. It is estimated that on a single night in January 2014, over 578,424 people in this country slept outside, in an emergency shelter or in a transitional housing program. This epidemic is not a distant statistic, it is right here in Tulsa. Approximately 6,500 individuals flow through our local shelters each year.

To address homelessness in the Tulsa area, 23 local organizations partnered together in 2015 to form A Way Home for Tulsa. This Tulsa-area collaboration then joined a national effort to end veteran and chronic homelessness called Zero: 2016, a two-year initiative with 74 other communities.

Zero: 2016 is organized by Community Solutions, a New York-based nonprofit helping communities like Tulsa optimize local resources, track progress against monthly housing goals and accelerate the spread of proven strategies.

In January 2016, A Way Home for Tulsa announced it had housed 298 veterans and 78 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, surpassing its goals for its first year. In fact, Tulsa is on track to be one of the first communities participating in Zero: 2016 to actually end chronic homelessness.

There will always be people – our friends and neighbors – who experience homelessness, but with the work of organizations like A Way Home for Tulsa, homelessness will be rare, brief and non-recurring.

Businesses, organizations and individuals can support Zero: 2016 Tulsa by becoming an ally, requesting a speaker, sharing information on social media or providing a financial contribution.

For more information or to help, visit Zero2016Tulsa.com