

For immediate release



**Thanksgiving Photo Op
PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Wednesday 11:00 AM NOVEMBER 23, 2016
Hava Java Coffee House
526 N. 19th Street Allentown PA 18104**

Wednesday, November 23, 2016 11:00 am Allentown, Pa. – *Sam Bennett Candidate for Mayor of Allentown 2017* holds press conference with Dannielle Makdesi, Owner of Hava Java Coffee House in Allentown and Dr. Diane Scott, former ten year Superintendent of the Allentown School District.

"Concerns about homelessness in our city rank fifth among Allentown residents in our ongoing *All American City Survey* we have been conducting throughout the city since Sam's campaign launched in June of this year" notes Dr. Diane Scott, who has been compiling this research as a campaign volunteer based on surveys collected at the door, at neighborhood and crime watch meetings and other gatherings. "When I was Superintendent of ASD (from 1992 to 2002) homelessness was a very real issue for a significant percentage of our students. I believe strongly, having observed Sam's ability to make positive change like the William Allen Construction Company that she founded when I was superintendent - that she is the right candidate for Mayor to help us improve our outcomes when it comes to homelessness for adults, families and ASD students."

Dannielle Makdesi stresses "I am so grateful to West End Alliance, Links, Don Ringer of Ringers Roost for all their , it has been six years since I first started to feed the homeless on Thanksgiving here at my coffee house. I pay for all my costs out of my own pocket and from generous donations from others in the community. It is the least we can do for people who have, often through no fault of their own, find themselves homeless at this time of year, especially children." Continues Makdesi, "the press has always asked to take photos and I've always refused. But this year, I'm inviting the press to come so others can see how important it is to give to others at this time of year - and because I'm supporting Sam for Mayor of Allentown. She's been homeless herself and is an amazing leader. I can't imagine a better combination for our next Mayor to deal with this issue."

Though PA has fewer people experiencing homelessness relative to population: 12 per 10,000 versus 18.3 nationally, the *Point-in-Time Count*¹ administered by The National Coalition to End Homelessness in January 2015² reported the Lehigh Valley had the highest percentage, 15% of unsheltered homeless people in PA, versus 11 percent statewide. Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley reports that while 1 in 10 residents of the Lehigh Valley are now living in poverty, in Allentown, it is 3 in 10 with 38% of homeless children. Of note, the largest subpopulation of homeless individuals and families, approximately 22% of the homeless population, were fleeing domestic violence.³

"My family and I are very much looking forward to assisting Danielle all day tomorrow. Our son David and I are baking 200 homemade dinner rolls and sweet potatoes to serve the hundreds of families Danielle expects tomorrow" notes Sam Bennett. "Having been homeless myself, I feel deep gratitude for the many blessings life has given. We want our son David, now a freshman at William Allen High School, to experience the true meaning of Thanksgiving."

¹ endhomelessness.org; *The 2015 Point In Time Count Is Finally Here*; Lisa Doran and Emanuel Cavallaro; retrieved November 19, 2016.

² crossroads.newsworks.org; *Homeless Population Up In Pennsylvania Down Nationally*; Emily Peviti; retrieved November 20, 2016; "considered...the most reliable source of statistics on homelessness in the U.S."

³ caclv.org *Who-We-Serve:Hard-Facts*; Retrieved November 20, 2016.

Continues Bennett "I have been a Governor Appointee to the Board of the Lehigh County Assistance Office for over fifteen years serving with pride with Linda Epstein and the late Attorney Jay Sherline. But there are many that the assistance office might not serve, including many children - and this is of high concern" notes Bennett. "For me, homelessness is personal. Seeking to escape sexual abuse doled out by a 'family friend' at sixteen I ran away to New York City and was immediately snatched at Port Authority into white sexual trafficking. Fortunate to escape when the slaver was severely wounded in a knife fight - I lived homeless on the streets of New York City during the winter of 1975 until I managed to get a job and save the money needed to get back home."

"There are powerful 'best practices' from around the world addressing homelessness we need to consider here in Allentown. There are many superb stakeholders who are doing much to address this problem in our community. What we cannot do is pretend this chronic problem doesn't exist. What we need is a Mayor with exceptional collaboration skills and a personal stake in this issue so we can maximize outcomes for our city, its residents and its homeless population. If elected CEO of our city by my fellow residents, I would be such a Mayor."

"On Thanksgiving Eve - we'd also like to thank the many volunteers and donors, like Dr. Diane Scott and Danielle Makdesi who have given our campaign for Mayor of Allentown 2017 an ever increasing momentum as we approach the December 31, 2016 campaign filing and January's 2017 petition outcomes that will determine who is on the ballot for the May 16, 2017 primary."

"I'M WITH SAM" CAMPAIGN SNAPSHOT *as of 11/22/2016*

- Funds raised to date for campaign \$40,096.15 (\$8,019.23 per month average raised since campaign announcement June 2016)
- Number of donors to date 87 donors (\$460.87 average per donor to date - almost 20% of donors giving small amounts of money monthly)
- Facebook Friends for Candidate 3552
- Likes for Facebook Campaign Page 700
- LinkedIn Followers for Candidate 1796

PRESS CONFERENCE AGENDA

11:00 am Dr. Diane Scott, former ASD Superintendent of Schools

11:10 am Dannielle Makdesi, Owner Hava Java Coffee House

11:15 am Sam Bennett, Candidate for Mayor of Allentown 2017

11:25 am Dannielle Makdesi, Owner Hava Java Coffee House - *announcing when press invited on Thanksgiving Day so all can understand the importance of this issue to Allentown and the Lehigh Valley community at large.*

For more information, please contact:

Sam Bennett

Text/ cell: 484-560-2810

sam@sambennett.info

www.sambennett.info