Local Homeless Service Providers Sprint to House Clients Amidst COVID-19

Thomas Jefferson Area Coalition for the Homeless

Charlottesville—4/6/20 — As the coronavirus continues spreading rapidly in the US and locally in the Charlottesville area, Thomas Jefferson Area Coalition for the Homeless is working with homeless service provider partners to ensure that people living in shelters are protected from the virus as much as possible.

Housing is Healthcare

People experiencing homelessness and living in shelters are at an increased risk for being exposed to the coronavirus because of the congregate sleeping arrangements in those shelters. Our local, low barrier shelter, PACEM, provides shelter for approximately 50 people on a given night, and Salvation Army provides shelter for another 60. A significant number of guests are over 50 years of age and deal with chronic health issues, putting many at an increased risk of a more severe illness. Because of this, shelters have instituted several sanitation measures as well as screening at entry for any symptoms. While these steps are vitally important, there’s one strategy that’s even more effective, according to Anthony Haro, executive director of Thomas Jefferson Area Coalition for the Homeless.

“One of the best things we can do right now, is to find permanent housing for folks so they can have a safe and isolated place amidst this pandemic,” said Haro. “We have funding for many folks to move into housing and be supported there, but we’re having a hard time finding any apartments willing to take anyone new.”
Right Now, Housing Options are Rare

The housing market in the Charlottesville area was already a difficult landscape with few affordable options, but with COVID-19 it has been difficult to find any rentals willing to accept new tenants.

“We need apartments right now, and we’re asking for the community’s help in making these available for rent,” said Haro. “Help us end homelessness and keep our community safe at the same time.”

The Haven, a day shelter and housing services provider in Charlottesville, has funding available to help shelter guests move into and pay for housing. They are seeking landlords and property managers who are willing to support this effort and rent to clients. Haro suggested that there are safe ways to conduct rental business right now without face-to-face contact using virtual apartment tours and electronic signing of documents and leases. Anyone interested in learning more or supporting this effort can contact Matthew Murphy, Housing Navigator, directly at matthew@thehaven.org.

They are also seeking monetary donations to provide rental assistance to help even more shelter guests move into their own home. Anyone interested in supporting this effort can donate online at www.thehaven.org.

For more information, press only:

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For more information on how to support:

Donations - www.thehaven.org
Landlords and property owners – matthew@thehaven.org