



## **New London Homeless Hospitality Center**

Providing a place of safety and welcome,  
to our homeless neighbors

## **Project Home** *Helping homeless veterans return to independent living*

### **The Need**

Since we began operation of our day time hospitality center in January 2007 we have identified a significant number of veterans among the homeless population. Each year about 90 veterans have utilized our overnight shelter—some for extended periods of time. Like every homeless individual, veterans in the grip of long term homelessness need access to stable housing and support services to return to independent living. The Veterans Administration has a program (called Grant and Per Diem) which provides access to this type of support. In an effort to secure these supports for veterans in New London, we pursued this funding through a rigorous national RFP process.

In October of 2009 we were selected to provide eight transitional housing units for homeless veterans in our area. Our plan is to serve as many as a dozen veterans each year. The first phase of the project is the acquisition and rehabilitation of a four family house (8 bedrooms) on Mountain Avenue in New London to provide up to two years of transitional housing for veterans selected for the program. Each veteran will have his/her own room in an apartment shared with one other veteran.

### **Paying for the Project**

The total cost of acquisition and renovation will be \$200,965. The Department of Veterans Affairs has awarded us \$130,627 (65% of project costs) toward this total. We are responsible for raising the remaining \$70,000 required. We have already identified funding sources for approximately \$46,800 of this match but are still seeking support for the remaining \$23,200 in project costs we need to cover.



**Mountain Avenue—Project Home**

Once the renovation is complete, the Department of Veterans Affairs will be providing an ongoing per diem grant to support operating and support service costs for the transitional housing program. By combining both capital funding and operational support, the Grant and Per Diem program offers us a unique opportunity to meet the needs of homeless veterans.

## **A place to live is the first step...then comes the hard work of returning to independent living.**

Homeless veterans face a variety of barriers as they work to return to permanent independent housing. Our goal is to support each veteran on his/her individual path with flexible supports tailored to each person's needs. We will directly offer only support services we believe are not available from, or cannot be as effectively delivered by, existing programs. The operation of the transitional housing and the costs of support services will be funded through the per diem portion of the grant.

### **Case Management**

Each program participant will have a designated case manager. Case managers will have experience in working with homeless individuals, demonstrated effectiveness in motivational interviewing approaches, basic knowledge of VA and community based resources and in many cases their own experience in the military. The case manager's primary tasks will be to enhance motivation for change through effective engagement, to help identify resources which can support the veteran in pursuing change and to provide practical support to the veteran as they implement their change plans.

### **Housing that supports transition to independent living**

Our design seeks to very intentionally use the time in transitional housing to help veterans develop the money management and independent living skills they will need to maintain permanent housing.

### **Help in securing benefits**

While case managers will support veterans as they pursue most applications for public benefits we have found that special expertise is required to support applications for SSI/SSDI. As needed, a member of our staff with specialized training and extensive experience in preparing applications for disability using a nationally tested and validated model (SOAR) will support veterans pursuing disability benefits.

## **Finding work will be a key challenge**

Increasing employment income is at the heart of our design. We will make extensive use of Department of Labor services targeted to veterans and existing skills training/job readiness programs. We will also devote our own staff time to developing paid and unpaid work experience opportunities for our participants. Utilizing a network of local employers, as developed through our local VFW and other contacts, we will develop paid part-time short-term employment opportunities uniquely tailored to the needs and skills of each veteran. Where paid employment is not feasible we will seek out internships, job shadowing and volunteer opportunities.

## **When will we start?**

Renovation is already underway and we hope to welcome our first veterans in June of 2010. We have short term bridge financing that will allow us to begin certain aspects of the project as we continue to raise our required matching funds.

## **For more information:**

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