

Press Release, June 2022
Housing El Dorado
Maureen Dion-Perry, President

Second Successful Year of Pathways Winter Lodging Completed

The Pathways Winter Lodging Program has now operated for two winters, 2020-21 and 2021-22. The Program was developed in the Fall of 2020 by a team of volunteers with deep experience in developing and operating winter housing programs for homeless residents. In the first year, the project was led by Julia Hackett, Pathways Program Manager with over 30 years experience working in & administering programs serving vulnerable populations, in consultation with Charlie McDonald, Executive Director of the Upper Room Dining Hall. The program was designed to serve a cohort of individuals with not only a warm, safe roof over their heads, but meals, case management, and navigation services with a goal of moving them forward into sustainability in both their housing and their lives.

During the 2020-21 winter, the Pathways Program operated 7 days a week from Jan. 1, 2021 to March 31, 2021 for a total of 90 days and was housed exclusively at Green Valley Community Church. This was the beginning of the COVID pandemic, and guests arrangements were according to Public Health Department requirements. The Pathways 2020-21 served 49 clients and provided a total of 761 bed nights,

During the 2021-22 Winter Lodging Program we expanded operations thanks to generous support from the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors and the City of Placerville. The 2021-22 Winter Shelter was led by Charlie McDonald, Program Manager and Nichole Paine, Assistant Program Manager. It operated for 125 days at five locations; Green Valley Community Church, Foothills United Methodist Church, Faith Episcopal Church, Discovery Hills Church, and a vacant City of Placerville building at 525 Main Street. Additional partners included El Dorado County Health and Human Services, Food Bank of El Dorado, Jobs Shelters of the Sierras, the El Dorado Interfaith Collaboration , Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless, and Marshall Medical Center.

During the 2021-22 Winter Lodging Program:

- We had 79 guests over the course of shelter and provided a grand total of 1,429 bed nights of shelter for our unhoused residents, almost double the number of bed nights in the previous winter's program
- Our average age was 48 years old; 71% of our guests were male while 29% were female.
- Over the course of the season, we provided lodging for 10 veterans (13%). Over 50% (40) of our guests considered themselves disabled. Nine guests (11%) were victims of domestic violence and 34 people (43%) reported needing assistance with health care and their prescriptions.
- Most of our guests (53%) identified Placerville as their primary place of residence. Another 28% identified elsewhere within the county; only 19% identified somewhere out-of-county as their primary residence.

- We had referrals from law enforcement and the jail, discharges from Marshall Hospital and the County's Psychiatric Health Facility, discharges from substance abuse treatment programs, and youth aging out of foster care.

Specific COVID screening and immunization protocols were developed for both seasons with input from County Public Health. Covid immunization was required for all guests, and Immunization Clinics were offered at the Upper Room in conjunction with County Public Health. We are pleased that we had no cases of COVID during both seasons of the Winter Lodging Program.

Most people on Main St were not aware that there was a night time homeless shelter operating in downtown Placerville. This shows that housing for homeless folks need not disrupt the neighborhood and cause problems. Guests expressed their heartfelt gratitude "for the shelter, the people, the respect, the community and the food". One person said "It was a lifesaver for me and provided a safe place to stay and recover after being discharged from the hospital." Another just discharged from a treatment program said that "The Shelter helps with my recovery and provides a choice for sobriety." In addition, "I can get up in the night and be safe and get help to become self-sufficient and find a room to rent."

There were around 40 staff and volunteers, and they reported enjoying interacting with everyone and finding that the Program had such a positive environment. There was good cooperation and friendliness from guests as well as appreciation.

Shower and Day Navigation Program has Restarted

We are grateful to our partners Job's Shelters of the Sierras and Green Valley Community Church who work together using HED vehicles to provide weekly showers and transportation to needed services like doctor's appointments, HHSA appointments and hospital services. These are much needed services for our homeless community.

In closing, everyone deserves a roof over their head to keep them safe and warm.

Each homeless individual has a story of difficulties and heartbreak. The majority are not addicts, mentally ill and lazy but are people who have come on hard times. Unfortunately, once you are living rough on the streets, it is hard to get back to stable living without having your basic needs met for housing, food, safety, medical care, and support. Housing is what it takes to help people become self-sufficient. The impact of the Pathways Program is not only on the individuals served. Studies show that by housing homeless folks there is a reduction of cost and workload for community law enforcement, emergency services, public works, and hospitals as well as improved education, employment, and community safety.