



NEWS

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OPPORTUNITY CENTER OF THE MIDPENINSULA HELPS CHRONICALLY HOMELESS REMAIN HOUSED AND BECOME EMPLOYED

Housing Authority of Santa Clara County and Community Working Group to Hold Event with Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, August 20, 2013, at 33 Encina Ave., Palo Alto

San Jose, Calif. – The Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara (HACSC) and the Community Working Group, Inc. (CWG), are holding a public event at The Opportunity Center of the Midpeninsula with guest of honor Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian. The Opportunity Center is a “Housing First” facility providing permanent housing plus comprehensive services and personalized case management to homeless singles and families. The press is invited to attend on Tuesday, Aug. 20, from 3:30-5:00 p.m. at The Opportunity Center of the Midpeninsula, 33 Encina Ave., Palo Alto, Calif., 94301.

Located in downtown Palo Alto and near Stanford University, in one of the wealthiest and yet most unaffordable places to live in the nation, The Opportunity Center has provided 193 homeless households with homes of their own and assisted many more individuals and families in finding their ways back to productive, self-sufficient lives. Personal success stories of center residents and service center clients provide support that the Housing First strategy for reducing homelessness is as effective in Palo Alto as it has been in other areas including New York, Santa Monica, Alameda County and San Francisco.

Formerly homeless residents maintain housing and employment

Mae, 50, has rented an Opportunity Center apartment for the past five years. She had been chronically homeless for 30 years, primarily in East Palo Alto. An InnVision Shelter Network client, Mae used all of the available services to get her to where she is now—housed and employed. “I’m currently working as a dishwasher at Stanford University, and I’ve had that job for seven years this November,” Mae says proudly. Mae’s two months at the Hotel De Zink rotating emergency shelter, janitorial work with Palo Alto’s Downtown Streets Team, and The Opportunity Center’s rehabilitative and medical services all have enabled her to earn an income. Mae and her roommate combined their incomes so that they could afford an apartment at the center—without enrolling in the center’s rental assistance program.

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“Mae joins hundreds of Opportunity Center residents and service center clients who have moved into permanent housing or are taking huge steps toward self-sufficiency,” says Dr. Don Barr, Stanford University Professor of Pediatrics and Human Biology, and a founder of the Community Working Group. “The several hundred names on the center’s housing wait list indicates a powerful need on the Peninsula for other centers like this one.”

Intense Case Management and Rental Subsidy Are Key to Regaining Self-Sufficiency

Personalized case management is paramount to helping people secure permanent housing and self-sufficiency. Last year, 2,975 case management services were provided to The Opportunity Center’s clients. The case managers, staff and specialist volunteers assist clients and residents with any type of issue, from housing or substance abuse to financial assistance and the justice system.

Equally important is the rental subsidy available to those who are unable to be housed due to insufficient or no income. Since its inception in 2006, the center’s rental subsidy program (provided by CWG) has aided 53 tenants, more than half of whom were disabled, chronically homeless and without income. Funds provided amounted to \$485,000. Through intense case management, 45 of the 53 tenants now are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits while eight are employed. A further 22 households are assisted by direct subsidy from HACSC, which has contributed \$1,398,870 in direct subsidy to date. Data show that on average, current households experience an increase in income of 20 percent during their stay at The Opportunity Center.

The Opportunity Center shows what can be done when a community and local governments work in partnership to solve a local problem such as homelessness. This strategy is even more important as federal budget cuts continue to deplete social services and affordable housing assistance funding.

Developed by a broad coalition of citizens, charities, local governments and educators, the mixed-use center combines 88 units of extremely low-income permanent housing with an on-site, drop-in service center for the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless. Services are provided by numerous nonprofit organizations, with InnVision Shelter Network providing the overall management and coordination. Charities Housing serves as the center’s property management. Currently 130 people including 23 children reside at the center. The tenants’ average stay of four years, with 20 percent of the tenants living at the center for more than 6 years, demonstrates that these formerly homeless households have managed to stabilize their lives.

About HACSC

HACSC is the largest provider of affordable housing assistance in Santa Clara County, helping make rental housing safe and affordable for low-income families through Section 8 voucher programs and below-market rental properties. The vast majority of client households are extremely low-income families with children, seniors, veterans, the disabled, and the formerly homeless. HACSC’s mission is keeping families housed and enabling low-income people in Santa Clara County to achieve financial stability and self-reliance. For further information about HACSC, visit www.hacsc.org. The Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara is located at 505 West Julian Street, San Jose, California, 95110.

About Community Working Group, Inc.

The Community Working Group, Inc., is a nonprofit organization that emerged as a community response to homelessness in the Midpeninsula of the San Francisco Bay Area. Its mission is to serve the needs of the homeless and those at-risk of becoming homeless in the Midpeninsula area (the cities of Palo Alto, East Palo Alto and Menlo Park) through the development and operation of housing and services, and through strategic alliances with community partners who are likewise committed to the promotion of human dignity.

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Other CWG housing developments include Alma Garden and 801 Alma Family Housing, both in Palo Alto. For more information, go to www.communityworkinggroup.org.

About InnVision Shelter Network (IVSN)

InnVision Shelter Network (IVSN) is the leading provider of shelter/housing and supportive services across Silicon Valley and the San Francisco Peninsula. IVSN operates 18 sites from San Jose to Daly City, providing emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing, along with a breadth of supportive resources to help clients secure a place to call home. The organization serves thousands of homeless clients annually through its “Beyond the Bed” service model – a proven methodology that delivers a 90% success rate in returning program graduates to permanent housing and self-sufficiency.

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