

Media Advisory – July 3, 2008

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County distributes \$2 million in homeless funds

Snohomish County has begun distributing more than \$2 million in county raised funding to support programs geared toward ending chronic homelessness.

The county's Human Services Department has awarded more than \$1.54 million to 20 projects that specifically serve homeless individuals and families in a variety of programs. Another \$500,000 is being used to support a housing voucher program tied to human services offered through the county and other organizations.

“This funding allows for innovative approaches to tackling one of Snohomish County's more pressing issues at hand,” said Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon. “Together with the county, these organizations are offering hope to a population in need.”

The money is part of Snohomish County's Ending Homelessness Program (EHP), which permits the county to collect local recording fees on real-estate transactions in support of efforts to end homelessness. The program was created by the state legislature in 2005 and amended in 2007 through ESSHB 2163 and HB1359.

Specifically, the \$1.54 million will be used to provide direct client-service programs, capital projects and other activities specifically targeted at ending or preventing homelessness in the county. Among recipients this year are Volunteers of America, Cocoon House, the Salvation Army, Snohomish County Legal Services, the YWCA and the Snohomish County Center for Battered Women.

Funding will be use to provide permanent housing options, case management for homeless domestic-violence victims, emergency rental assistance, eviction prevention and children's services for homeless families.

Each recipient and funding amount was determined by the county's EHP Advisory Committee, made up of five members with expertise in housing and homelessness issues.

The \$500,000 voucher program is new this year and will provide housing assistance connected to human services during a three-year period for up to 50 families.

Families participating in the program will receive a housing voucher from the Housing Authority of Snohomish County (HASCO). Supportive services will be provided by the Snohomish County Community Action Partnership/Workforce Development Council, Cocoon House and Sunrise Services/Washington Home of Your Own agencies. This

assistance will be tailored to the individual family and could include services such as financial literacy education, chemical-dependency help or parenting services.

“Each program supports the county’s plan to end homelessness by 2016,” said Reardon, who convened the county’s Housing and Homelessness Policy Oversight Committee in January.

The committee has been asked to establish benchmarks for forthcoming homeless and housing initiatives as well as guide long-term strategies. Represented are leaders from local and state government, the housing and real-estate industry, educators, nonprofit executives, business leaders and members of the faith community.

For more information on the Ending Homelessness Program, contact Dean Weitenhagen, Supervisor of the county’s Office of Housing, Homelessness & Community Development, at 425-388-3267 or dean.weitenhagen@snoco.org.

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