

2020 COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION GRANT

REACH Home Transitional Shelter \$2,025



Housing is a human right.

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Project Report:

What were you hoping to accomplish?

In 2020, REACH Advocacy received a \$2,025 grant to help us compensate our volunteer staff. We pay stipends to our staff along with bonuses if they stay with us for the season. Staffing costs are the largest portion of our expenses. As we all know, 2020 was an unusual year to say the least. Our shelter remained open during the shutdown caused by the Pandemic and we are proud to say, with concentrated effort to use safe practices, we did not have any cases of COVID-19 in the Shelter. By late Spring of 2020 we transitioned 56% of our guests to permanent housing. The most at-risk and vulnerable guests were transitioned to area hotels where they could have individual rooms with less chance of being affected by the virus. This innovative way of housing people living with chronic homelessness proved to be beneficial for the empty hotels and the housing-deprived, vulnerable guests. Our staff transitioned to the hotels as our winter shelter closed toward the end of May. We stayed open much later than most years. REACH has continued into 2021 supporting our former guests in the hotels with our staff, some meals, and supplies. Monroe County DHS is also providing support for the hotels.

Who is touched by your project or program?

Our program is ongoing, and a variety of people have been touched. Primarily, the 150+ guests housed at REACH Home each winter many of whom have been placed in permanent homes of their own. This past fall REACH Home did not open due to the pandemic and instead we supported people living with chronic homelessness in several ways. First, as stated above, we supported the most vulnerable guests in area hotels providing staffing, food, supplies, and social work services. Since December, our social work team and one of our board members who works at the Father Tracy Advocacy Center have created a street outreach in two different neighborhoods—the SWAN area near Jefferson Avenue and North Clinton Avenue near St. Michael's Church. We are touching many new people's lives providing sandwiches,



REACH home



REACH home bathroom



REACH home bedroom

personal care supplies, gloves, and hats as well as connections to needed services. This program has been so rewarding as we meet people on the streets on their terms. REACH plans to open REACH Home again in November 2021 as the health risks of the Pandemic diminish, but due to our Street Outreach we have formed many new connections with people on the street. These connections will help us as we open REACH Home as a year-round community drop-in center this summer.

How did this grant energize or transform your congregation or community?

The support of the Presbytery of the Genesee Valley has helped to fund stipends this past year for staff to create a comfortable, safe environment for persons who are living with chronic homelessness. Many of our staff are formerly “homeless” men and women who are getting a chance to learn productive work skills. Knowing that there are faith communities such as yours willing to help with financial support is the foundation of REACH’s programs. Thank you for your generosity and faith. Your willingness to help is energizing and transformational. In turn we work together to transform the lives of people not as fortunate.



Volunteers setting up the shelter

What did you learn from this project and what are your next steps?

Over the last six years the people working with REACH have learned so much about the struggles to find affordable housing and the struggles of people living with chronic homelessness. Most of us knew nothing about these issues and have come to realize that truly affordable housing is the true issue in the Rochester area. For every 10 families looking for affordable homes, there are only 3 available. We have also learned that the people we see on the streets who we call, “homeless,” could be you or me. They are our brothers and sisters who because of an illness or a sudden life changing event have lost their home. We believe, Housing is a Human Right!



Volunteers preparing up the shelter

For Congregations: Share a story of where you saw God in this project.

We are not one congregation, but many of us belong to a variety of churches and faith organizations. I can say personally that I have seen God all along our journey. The Monroe County Community has been so supportive by willingly volunteering to support our project and the less fortunate in our community with funding, time, and many in-kind donations.