Quickly Housing Those Who Need it Most, Like Clyde

by Stephanie Lefebvre, Office Manager

Since the New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness implemented the Coordinated Assessment Project on June 1st, 18 chronically homeless individuals have been successfully housed in New Mexico through the project. Clyde, who asked to remain anonymous, is one of them.

For Clyde, it all started when Maria Horta, who works at the Santa Fe Community Housing Trust, took a Case Management workshop on October 3rd. NMCEH organized the workshop and asked Linda Simon, from Sandoval County Housing, to be one of the trainers. During the workshop, Linda explained that the Coordinated Assessment is a system that uses a standardized assessment to assess a homeless individual's or family's vulnerability and to refer them immediately to housing options that meet their needs.

Exactly one week following the workshop, Clyde walked into Maria's office. Clyde had been homeless for years, living outside year-round, as no shelter could accommodate him with his companion dog. With his health declining, Clyde, who is in his early sixties and disabled, worried he could not face, yet, another winter. Maria proceeded to enter Clyde's information into the Coordinated Assessment System, which identified Clyde as a "high vulnerability client". The same day, Clyde's application was matched with a housing opportunity in Sandoval County. The following Tuesday, Clyde was able to visit apartments in Sandoval County and selected his new home. Clyde moved in the same day.

Clyde is currently housed in a one bedroom apartment. He receives supportive services from the Sandoval County Shelter Plus Care program.

A few days ago, when Coordinated Assessment Director, Roman Seaburgh, asked what it meant for him to be housed, Clyde answered: “Well basically it got me out of the cold and you know the ability to sleep on a real bed and … Ahhh, you know be able to cook food, rather than having to rely on being in the cold or the feeding places. So you know, it’s just better.”

Roman Seaburgh, Coordinated Assessment Director, and Stephanie Lefebvre, Office Manager, reviewing the Coordinated Assessment data. Rome and Stephanie are working behind the scenes to make coordinated assessment work throughout New Mexico, so that people experiencing homelessness can be quickly matched to housing that meets their needs.
**Thank you to Our Individual Supporters (Since September 2014) Continued:**

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**Our Sincere Gratitude Goes Out to These Individuals & Organizations**

**Special Thanks to:**

Nat Owings for hosting our Veterans fundraiser at the Owings Gallery.

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Mayors Javier Gonzales of Santa Fe, Richard Berry of Albuquerque, and Ken Miyagishima of Las Cruces for joining First Lady Michelle Obama’s challenge to end veteran homelessness by the end of 2015.

Peter Chapin, Gloria Holloway, Patti Ferguson, Tom Aageson, Abigail Adler and Joyce Idema for hosting our member and donor thank you party.

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In Memory of Toby Clark, a founding member of the NMCEH Advisory Board, President of Santa Fe Community Services and generous supporter of work to help homeless people. He left his mark on our hearts!

**Thank you to Our Individual Supporters (Since September 2014):**

- Abigail Adler
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**WE APPRECIATE OUR MAJOR ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORTERS:**

- New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority
- The City of Albuquerque
- The Daniels Fund
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- The US Department of Housing and Urban Development

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**Announcement:** Please mark your calendar for April 9, 2015 for the NMCEH Fourth Annual Conference at the Cascada Hotel in Albuquerque.
Domestic Violence Programs Adopt Rapid Rehousing
To Help Their Clients Get Back Into the Community
by Hank Hughes, Executive Director

Domestic Violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness, particularly among women and children, and a number of domestic violence programs in New Mexico are part of the New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness. This year several of these domestic violence programs which had transitional housing services are switching to a rapid rehousing approach. Rapid Re-housing has been recognized nationally as a best practice for helping homeless families with children quickly regain permanent housing and to minimize the negative impacts of homelessness. Quickly regaining a stable home is particularly important for children who often get behind in school and socially when homelessness forces their family to stay with various friends or in shelters.

With rapid re-housing a family is helped to rent an apartment or house that the family will live in permanently. The rapid re-housing funds are used to pay for that portion of the rent that the family cannot yet afford and for supportive services to help the family overcome other obstacles in their life. As the family’s income increases, the amount of rental assistance they receive decreases until the family is able to pay the full rent and continue on their own. At domestic violence shelters, families are only offered rapid re-housing when it is safe for them to leave the shelter without fear of further abuse.

The switch from transitional housing to rapid re-housing has been happening gradually, with many agencies designing transitional housing programs that were very similar to rapid re-housing. Two years ago the Department of Housing and Urban Development created a separate program type called rapid re-housing and this year they made it easy for transitional housing programs to switch. Those agencies that will now be doing rapid re-housing are La Casa in Las Cruces, Esperanza in Santa Fe, and Valencia Shelter in Los Lunas. Other programs that serve homeless families in general have also made the switch including Catholic Charities of Central New Mexico and the Mesilla Valley Community of Hope.

With rapid re-housing we expect to be able to help more families get out of homelessness and to help them more quickly.

The 2015 legislative session will open in mid-January with new opportunities for the Coalition and our advocacy efforts. For the first time in many years, the NM House of Representatives is controlled by Republicans. On the one hand, this poses challenges as many of our strongest allies are Democrats. However, ending homelessness is a bi-partisan issue, and the new political situation will compel us to do a better job explaining why that is. For example, we need to help all our elected officials understand that helping people obtain housing saves taxpayer dollars because they are less likely to utilize expensive, public resources such as detox facilities, emergency rooms and jails.

With this in mind, our main focus during the legislative session will be on both protecting and increasing funding for services that help people experiencing homelessness obtain and maintain permanent housing. In particular, we will focus on increasing funding for Rapid ReHousing and the services that go with supportive housing – all proven models for helping to end homelessness. We also expect Senator Bill O’Neill from Albuquerque to introduce legislation that would amend the state hate crime statute to include crimes committed against people because they are homeless. We believe that this bill will offer some protection to people living on the streets and also send a strong message these folks have the right to be safe.

We will kick off the legislative session with our annual lobby day, which take place on Wednesday, February 4th. Please contact Lisa Huval, our Policy & Advocacy Director, for more information at lisa-h@nmceh.org or (505) 217-9570 x 2.
I've been homeless and I know
People tell you not to go
Into a world which most don't dare,
But I have lived it, I've been there.

Worries, issues, addictions and such
Can destroy a person so very much
That they are not able to freely see
The life ahead and what can be.

When my freedom finally opened my
eyes
And I conquered my fear and dropped
my disguise,
I found that there are people who really care
And there is life everywhere.

Then I was able to start to live among others,
All of my sisters and all of my brothers,
I became stable, never again to roam,
This is the purpose of heading home.