

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

WHO: Marin Organizing Committee, St. Vincent de Paul Society of Marin, and Homeward Bound of Marin

WHEN: Tuesday, April 17, 7:00 pm

WHERE: St. Raphael's Church, 1104 Fifth Avenue, San Rafael

WHAT: Public candlelight vigil

WHY: We are gathering to commemorate the end of REST (the Rotating Emergency Shelter Team) and the start of a new best-practice system of care to end homelessness in Marin, called Housing Focused Shelter. We are calling on the County of Marin, the Marin County Council of Mayors and Councilmembers, and the Marin Community Foundation to continue their partnership with us in supporting this expanded vision toward ending chronic homelessness in Marin.

BACKGROUND:

San Rafael, CA – April 12, 2018 —The Marin Organizing Committee (MOC) will hold a public candlelight vigil on Tuesday, April 17 at 7:00 PM at St. Raphael's Catholic Church in San Rafael to commemorate the end of Marin's Rotating Emergency Shelter Team (REST) and the start of a new, best-practice system to end homelessness, called Housing Focused Shelter.

Vigil participants will gather at the St. Vincent de Paul Society free dining room on B Street at 6:30 PM and march to the steps of St. Raphael's church. There, MOC leaders will highlight the 10-year success of the rotating REST model and also explain the details of the new, Housing Focused model which will be formalized in the coming months.

"We have a lot of congregations and volunteers to thank for the 10 years that they committed to providing winter shelter for individuals in Marin who were experiencing homelessness," says Pat Langley from MOC. "At the same time, we have learned much about the best way to address homelessness, and ultimately the answer is not night-to-night shelter, it is housing. Therefore, we are endorsing and advancing a new Housing Focused Shelter model that emphasizes permanent housing as the goal, prioritizing community resources to that end."

Staff at Homeward Bound of Marin and the St. Vincent de Paul Society have been studying national best practices related to implementing low-barrier, year-round, 24-hour Housing Focused Shelter that leads directly to housing. Both organizations are shifting their systems of service delivery to better serve vulnerable homeless adults and families. This partnership furthers a county-wide collaboration to house people who have fallen through the cracks in our local safety net.

"Shifting to low-barrier, Housing Focused shelter is a natural evolution prompted by what we've learned from OrgCode, Community Solutions and the National Alliance to End Homelessness—i.e., to align the shelter system to 'Housing First' principles and, most of all, to improve housing outcomes for the most vulnerable homeless adults and families in Marin County," says Mary Kay Sweeney, Executive Director at Homeward Bound of Marin.

Christine Paquette, Executive Director at St. Vincent de Paul Society of Marin concurs. "The evidence from national studies makes it clear that Housing Focused Shelter in conjunction with Housing First principles have by far the best outcomes for people experiencing homelessness. St. Vincent de Paul Society of Marin and our partners are committed to strategies that have proven results. We look forward to accomplishing our community goal of ending chronic homelessness in Marin by the year 2022."

Homeward Bound of Marin as well as St. Vincent de Paul Society will offer a host of opportunities for volunteers from the REST program who want to continue their commitment to fragile people experiencing homelessness.

A truly Housing First model of care will require both a shift in vision and programming as well as a shift in funding. In order to implement a Housing Focused Shelter strategy, an increased investment in case management and other infrastructure will be required.

"We call upon our elected officials and community to stand with us collaboratively in this important work," said Rev. Jan Reynolds, pastor of First Presbyterian Church of San Rafael and Marin Organizing Committee. "Justice requires permanent housing over a temporary spot on a church floor. The County of Marin, The Marin County Council of Mayors and Councilmembers, and the Marin Community Foundation have been important partners in REST over the years, and we call on them now to partner with us in this expanded vision toward ending chronic homelessness in Marin."

For more information, please contact Pat Langley at 415-226-8140.