

Successful Project Finds Homes for Families, Brings More Resources to the Region

Building on the success of a pilot homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing project funded by the Hartford Foundation, the region has received \$4.5 million in federal stimulus funding to expand the project in Hartford and surrounding towns.

Last year, the Foundation supported the development of the pilot project with grants totaling close to \$100,000. More than a year later, 22 of the 25 families served are still in their homes.

The pilot was a collaboration among several agencies:

- Journey Home — the agency created in 2007 to implement Greater Hartford's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness — helped identify gaps in service, developed the project, and convened the participating agencies.
- Salvation Army's Marshall House conducted interviews with and provided case management services to families.
- My Sisters' Place confirmed the need for and provided financial assistance to families.
- Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness collected and aggregated data on families and services provided.

Homeless families being served by area shelters and agencies throughout Greater Hartford were

referred to the program and quickly assisted in moving into more permanent housing. This was possible because of the close collaboration of agencies, availability of direct financial assistance

for security deposits and rent support, and ongoing case management.

"We look at all the reasons a family is homeless, and work on addressing those issues," said Sandy Barry, executive director of Marshall House. "A family might need help finding affordable housing or a job, or with budgeting. Whatever it is, we connect them with community agencies that can help with their specific problems."

Now, due to the success of the pilot, the City of Hartford has received \$1.5 million in federal stimulus funding for a program to serve Hartford residents, and Journey Home has received a three-year, \$3 million grant from the Department of Social Services to coordinate services in surrounding towns, again collaborating with several agencies: Chrysalis Center, Salvation Army Marshall House, CT AIDS Resource Coalition, Co-Opportunity, and Greater Hartford Legal Aid. In addition, the Foundation awarded Journey Home a three-year, \$195,000 grant for coordination and implementation of the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness.

"Working with our partners, we not only help individual households avoid and end homelessness, but we are improving the way local services are delivered," said Sarah Gallagher, Journey Home executive director. "The pilot demonstrated that a preventative, proactive and solutions-oriented response to the needs of our lowest income neighbors helps end the cycle of homelessness. Going forward, the goal is to help more people earlier in their crisis to minimize the disruption and reduce the cost of homelessness, and curtail the use of expensive emergency services."

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One Family's Story

Eighteen months ago, Madeline was jobless and facing eviction. She didn't know where she and her three children — ages 14, 8 and 1 — would end up. But she knew she had to do everything in her power to provide for her kids.

She turned to the Salvation Army's Marshall House, a shelter in Hartford's Asylum Hill

neighborhood, and received help through the homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing pilot project, coordinated through Journey Home, the agency in charge of implementing Greater Hartford's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness.

"I don't know where I would be without Marshall House," said Madeline. "They gave me a safe place where I could regroup and find a job. Then they helped me find an apartment, get furniture, helped me with budgeting. And my case manager, Christie, calls to be sure I'm doing OK. She is there for me."

Madeline still struggles to pay the bills, but things are looking up. She has been employed full-time and the apartment has been her home for more than a year.

Madeline's oldest daughter started her second year at Capital Prep Magnet High School this fall and has inspired Madeline to enroll in classes at Capital Community College.

"My kids keep me going," said Madeline. "They make me want to be a better person. And with Marshall House's help, that's what I'm doing."

PHOTO: RILEY JOHNSON



Madeline, here with two of her three children, has been in permanent housing for more than a year, thanks to help from Salvation Army's Marshall House.