



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Help for Suburban Homeless Just in Time **Unity Challenge Fund to aid 12 Homeless Groups**

The Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County is pleased to announce new resources for twelve suburban homeless organizations. The Chicago Community Trust selected the suburban Alliance as one of seven grant recipients in the first round of **The Unity Challenge**, the Trust's \$3 million initiative to expand capacity of not-for-profit agencies meeting such basic human needs as food and shelter in response to the economic downturn. The goal of The Unity Challenge is to make sure that the agencies on the front lines of serving the food and shelter needs of individuals and families have the resources they need to meet increased demand.

The Alliance will distribute the \$150,000 grant to twelve homeless organizations that provide emergency shelter or homeless prevention services in suburban Cook County.

"As 2008 came to a close, homeless agencies were feeling the pinch of increased demand for services because of the economy, coupled with fewer year-end donations to their organizations," explained Jennifer Hill, executive director of the **Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County**. "The Chicago Community Trust got in front of the problem by appealing to the general public to meet the growing needs for food and shelter, acting quickly to make high-impact grants in Chicago and the suburbs."

In late December, The **Chicago Community Trust** announced the creation of The Unity Challenge, designed to provide funding to nonprofits that require more resources to serve the escalating needs of Chicago area residents who have been hit hardest by the economic crisis. The Trust is working to raise \$1 million for the Unity Challenge Fund. To encourage donations, it is providing a two-to-one match, with the overall goal of a \$3 million Fund.

"At this moment of economic uncertainty we see tremendous and still increasing needs in our community," said Terry Mazany, president and chief executive officer of the Trust. "Even though the economy has stalled, Chicagoans' capacity to care has only increased."

The Trust contacted the Alliance, the coordinating body for suburban Cook County homeless housing and services, seeking its recommendations on how to make the greatest impact on emergency shelters and homeless prevention assistance in the suburbs. Trust and Alliance staff worked together to define the needs and select organizations to receive additional funding.

Homeless Services Planned to Increase

The \$150,000 grant will be used to support the operations of twelve emergency homeless shelters and homelessness prevention agencies in diverse areas of Cook County. The shelters represent 448 beds a night, providing over 100,000 shelter nights to families and individuals in one year. An estimated 30-40 families will avoid homelessness altogether by receiving homeless prevention assistance, which covers back rent or mortgage payments for families experiencing a hardship.

West Suburban PADS, a seasonal overnight shelter, is looking to expand its shelter season into the summer months to be year-round. Top needs identified include homeless prevention assistance. In November 2008, PADS had a pipeline of 32 households already qualified to receive prevention assistance when the state prevention dollars ran out.

“With this special initiative, West Suburban PADS will be able to aid more households who are at imminent risk of losing their housing by providing financial assistance with back rent or mortgage payments,” according to Lynda Schueler, executive director of West Suburban PADS. “The funding will also be used to rapidly re-house those who have become homeless by assisting with their first month’s rent or a security deposit.”

“**Journeys from PADS to HOPE** will benefit greatly from these funds,” said Beth Nabors, executive director of this north suburban emergency shelter provider. “It is because of the generosity of the Trust and the consideration of the Alliance to End Homelessness that Journeys will be able to prevent more people from becoming homeless during these challenging economic times.”

Increased Demand for Emergency Assistance

“Requests for homelessness prevention have skyrocketed during the current economic downturn,” reported Mary Schurder, executive director of **The Center of Concern**, in Park Ridge. “People are having to make difficult choices, sometimes between feeding their children and paying their rent. With most of our funds for this service being tied to the availability of state grants, we are grateful to receive this additional support on behalf of our housing clients.”

South Suburban PADS, the largest provider of suburban homeless shelter services in Cook County, has experienced a surge in overnight guests. With supply prices rising 28% over last year, an expanded season, and recent overcrowding, PADS projects a 75% increase in basic supply costs (socks, food, hygiene items, mattresses, etc.) compared to last year.

Carl Wolf, executive director of **Respond Now**, a south suburban homelessness prevention agency, noted that “the demand has increased in the last two years, but our funding has not matched this increased demand. This funding through the Unity Challenge will help us achieve our goal of increasing our capability to prevent homelessness for more people in the south suburbs.”

Organization	Region	Emergency Shelter Beds	Award Amount
The Center of Concern	North	Prevention	\$ 5,000
Connections for the Homeless	North	15	\$ 5,000
Journeys from PADS to HOPE	North	85	\$ 24,500
WINGS - Safe House	North	30	\$ 8,500
BEDS PLUS	West	40	\$ 11,500
Catholic Charities	West	Prevention	\$ 5,000
Thresholds - Safe Haven	West	15	\$ 5,000
West Suburban PADS	West	53	\$ 15,000
Bethel Community Facility	South	60	\$ 17,500
Respond Now	South	Prevention	\$ 5,000
South Suburban PADS	South	150	\$ 43,000
Together We Cope	South	Prevention	\$ 5,000
		448	\$150,000

For 93 years, **The Chicago Community Trust**, our region’s community foundation, has connected the generosity of donors with community needs by making grants to organizations working to improve metropolitan Chicago. In 2008, the Trust, together with

its donors, granted more than \$100 million to not-for-profit organizations. From strengthening community schools to assisting local art programs, from building health centers to helping lives affected by violence, the Trust continues to enhance our region. To learn more, please visit the Trust online at www.cct.org.

The Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County is a non-profit organization responsible for planning and coordinating homeless services and housing options for all of Cook County outside of Chicago and Evanston.

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