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ST. JOHN'S HOMELESS SHELTER EXPANDS SERVICES TO RESPOND TO INCREASING HOMELESS NEED AMID COVID-19 CRISIS

GREEN BAY, Wis., March 16, 2020 – Since St. John's Homeless Shelter opened our doors nearly 15 years ago, we have always sought to meet the need of our most vulnerable homeless brothers and sisters, never operating with capacity by utilizing off-site overflow locations when our building capacity of 84 is reached. With growing concerns about the global pandemic of the COVID-19 virus, St. John's is once again stepping in to meet the need by expanding our emergency shelter services. Because we have seen record numbers of guests already this year, with 123 guests just last night, we see a need to directly and safely meet the needs of these individuals in this time of the COVID-19 crisis, while also meeting the need of the greater community.

Since late February, we have been instituting preventative measures outlined by the CDC and government entities, yet we see the need to do more to best support the guests we serve and to address the safety of our community. Beginning Wednesday, March 18, St. John's Homeless Shelter will begin operating two 24-hour shelter sites, one at our Shelter and the other at a downtown area church, providing for the continuous care of those vulnerable adults who would otherwise be on the streets during this health crisis.

By operating two emergency shelter sites, we are able to create smaller groups of guests and promote social distancing to help mitigate the possibility of community spread of the COVID-19 virus. While there have been no cases of COVID-19 in Brown County or among our guests, we have been in communication with local health officials, and we are prepared if a guest at our shelter were to test positive for the COVID-19 virus.

Lastly, in order to expand our shelter services as outlined above, we will temporarily close our daytime centers, the Micah Center and Wellspring.

We know that many community members are asking what they can do to help, and we do need the community's support now more than ever as we continue to meet a growing need in a time of crisis.

Meals and Food Donations: We are in immediate need for partnerships and donations to help meet our meal needs. Due to the COVID-19 virus, we have seen a decline in meal teams able to provide dinners to our shelter guests. This combined with the additional shelter site we will be opening on Wednesday, necessitates an urgent call to our community for support to supplement the need for meals. We are looking to help a local restaurant or business who may be struggling in this time of economic decline by raising funds to cover costs for them to provide food nightly for us to serve to our guests. Businesses interested in being part of the solution should contact us at their earliest convenience about possible partnership. Those looking to donate to help cover food costs should go to www.stjohnhomelessshelter.org/donate.

Transportation Needs: Due to the closing of the transit system in Green Bay, many of our guests with jobs are suddenly unable to get to work, so we are asking for community members who are able to donate to help get guests to work to reach out to us at info@sjehs.org. This is an immediate need.

Up-to-Date Communications: As an organization, we recognize that this is a fluid situation, and we will provide additional updates as they arise. Current updates will be posted to our dedicated webpage at www.stjohnhomelessshelter.org/covid19.

Basic Donation Needs: St. John's will be limiting the donations we accept. For community members looking to help, donations can still be brought to St. John's Homeless Shelter, but we ask that the community only bring the items of immediate need indicated below. Community members looking to donate can also call ahead to :

- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol)
- Disinfectant wipes and bleach
- Masks
- Gloves
- Toilet paper
- Pre-packaged food
- Paper products (plates, cups, napkins, etc.)

We are incredibly thankful for the community support we have received and for the partnership that allows us to continue to serve our homeless brothers and sisters. Support from our Green Bay community is crucial at this time, and we know that in a time of crisis such as this, we see the very best our community has to give. Visit this webpage for more information and ways to help: www.stjohnhomelesshelter.org/covid19.

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