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Welcome House Moves Homeless Citizens into a Hotel

Move is phase three in Welcome House's COVID-19 disaster plan

[Covington, KY] Today, Welcome House of Northern Kentucky managed the move of more than 40 homeless citizens from the Northern Kentucky Convention Center into a hotel, where they will be housed at the organization's expense for the 30-day quarantine issued by the State of Kentucky. The move is phase three of Welcome House's disaster plan to address the needs of the homeless during the COVID-19 emergency.

Welcome House will spend more than \$12,000 per week for the 42 hotel rooms – injecting much-needed revenue into the facility, which was empty in accordance with the state mandate. Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky is providing transportation. Welcome House and Emergency Shelter of Northern Kentucky employees will staff the hotel. Each day during the stay, Cornerstone will provide breakfast, Fair Haven and Be Concerned will provide lunch, and PeeWee's Restaurant will provide hot dinners. Lord's Gym will be doing regular grocery runs.

"It is amazing and inspiring to see Northern Kentucky come together like this to take care of our homeless citizens," said Welcome House CEO Danielle Amrine. "This is what's possible when we all work as a team."

Amrine said the use of a hotel is ideal for both protecting the homeless population and following the state's quarantine guidelines. Each guest will have his or her own room, ensuring the requisite social distancing. Guests can shower and otherwise attend to their hygiene needs. The Welcome House nurse will conduct physical exams and consultation.

"And we will also be providing them a level of dignity," said Amrine. "To see the reactions of these folks when we told them we were moving them to a hotel was both heart-warming and humbling. A few of them cried."

Also in phase three, the Welcome House mobile medical clinic will continue to visit homeless encampments to take temperatures, provide supplies and education and hand out care packages.

By utilizing the Convention Center for phase two, Welcome House was able to provide 838 bed nights of shelter and service to nearly 140 individuals. Guests received health and case management assessments and regular monitoring. No guests have reported a fever or other COVID-19 symptoms.

Phase one of the Welcome House plan was the implementation of its infectious disease protocol – including locking down its shelter, closing its Kings Crossing location, providing limited services from its Pike Street facility and having 70-percent of its staff working from home. Welcome House provided hotel rooms for high-risk shelter clients and helping get families off the street. The organization’s Street and Medical Outreach teams continued visiting camps and other areas to check on people, take temperatures, hand out care packages, provide handouts and education and discourage gatherings of 10 or more people.

Phase four of the Welcome House plan calls for data tracking and reporting. Phase five will include a general debrief, indicated actions and planning for the next disaster.

“I’m proud of how our organization and our team are responding to this emergency,” said Amrine, who worked 13 years at the American Red Cross managing disaster operations, including those related to the 9/11 attacks, Hurricane Katrina and countless tornados. “We have a lot of work left to do. But we’re ready.”

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About Welcome House

Founded in 1982, Covington-based Welcome House of Northern Kentucky works to end homelessness across the state. The organization’s continuum of services includes providing homeless individuals and families shelter and housing and ensuring people who are on the brink of homelessness or living in extreme poverty stay housed by managing their income and benefits. Welcome House also coordinates services with other community organizations to provide stability for everyone they serve. The Welcome House staff of nearly 50 includes experts in housing, budgeting, social security benefits, accounting, healthcare and street outreach. They are supported by thousands of volunteers and donors and a board of directors comprising community leaders and industry experts. Welcome House was a 2019 recipient of a \$1.25 million grant from the Day 1 Families Fund – created by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos to provide grants to organizations moving the needle on family homelessness.