



PLYMOUTH TASKFORCE

To End Homelessness

Fall, 2020 eNews

Overnights of Hospitality

At the close of last season, COVID-19 was just beginning to change our world as we knew it. Who would have believed that our lives would become so disrupted. I dare say none of us hasn't been affected in some way, whether through the loss of someone due to the disease and/or financially. For our homeless folk, this pandemic has been especially problematic.

Because businesses and public buildings were being shut down, our homeless folk had no place to go inside for meals and facilities after the season would have ended at the beginning of April. The Taskforce decided to find a way to provide shelter for a longer period. After exploring several different options, we chose to rent Pilgrim Sands for at least two months. The challenge was obtaining the funding to cover the cost of the rental. Thankfully, we were able to do so through the receipt of several major grants and generous donations from various individuals and organizations. While renting the hotel, we had some challenges with managing the folks. However, we were happy to report that there were no COVID-19 infections among the guests.

As we looked towards beginning our 2020-2021 shelter season, we were faced with finding an alternative to the church model which has been in place since 2004. Due to CDC guidelines, there will not be enough space to shelter up to 25 individuals (our previous limit) per night at either of the two church sites. So, once again, the Taskforce in conjunction with FBMS, will be renting rooms at the Pilgrim Sands. Due to limitations of staffing and the fact that we are putting only one person in each room for health and safety reasons, there will be a cap of 20 homeless individuals per night.

The Taskforce received a substantial grant from the SouthCoast Community Foundation which will be applied to cover some of the cost to shelter at the Sands. FBMS is applying for additional COVID-19 funding through FEMA and state resources. It is our hope that these resources will fully cover the costs for renting and staffing. However, there may be other unforeseen costs associated with this model, so we will gratefully receive donations through our website, plymouh-taskforce-homeless.org or by mail to our PO Box 3986, Plymouth, MA 02361.

Operational details are in process of being developed, but the plan will include one paid FBMS staffer and one volunteer chaperone. Meals will be provided by our volunteers who sign up through MealTrain Plus. Details for meal planning and serving will be posted on MealTrain when they have been finalized. We will be looking for volunteers

to chaperone. There will be one or more zoom meetings TBD for volunteer chaperones to go over their responsibilities.

Board News

We welcome new board members – Jewel Gilbert and Teri Reid. Robert Hughes is returning after a long hiatus due to health issues. These three have already added value to our board and work of the Taskforce. Jewel has some previous professional experience in working with the homeless. She works with the providers of noon lunches and has worked with board member Rick Edwards in writing and obtaining grants. Teri is a physician who is connecting with the town's Board of Health to relay the issues the homeless face during this pandemic regarding the lack of facilities such as handwashing stations and PortaPotties. She is also advocating for free and accessible COVID-19 testing and flu shot clinics. Bob was helpful this past spring in working with his church in Duxbury to provide meals while the guests were at the Pilgrim Sands. We also welcome back Peggy Hall to her former position as Housing Case Manager in the Plymouth Office. She lives in Plymouth and knows many of the homeless folk and those whom we have housed, so she was able to hit the ground running.