

Summary of April 22 Hypothermia Program Information Session

On April 22, 2012 more than 100 partners, consumers, faith based organizations and county staff came together at St. Stephens United Methodist Church, in Burke to, discuss challenges and issues that arose during the 2011-2012 season of Fairfax County's Hypothermia Prevention Program. Speakers at the meeting included Fairfax County Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, Sharon Bulova; Braddock District Supervisor John Cook; Deputy County Executives Pat Harrison and Rob Stalzer; Director of the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness, Dean Klein and Executive Director of FACETS, Amanda Andere. Opening and closing prayers were led by Reverend Melissa Porter-Miller, St. Stephens United Methodist Church and Reverend Ron Qualley, Lord of Life Lutheran Church, respectively.

The Hypothermia Prevention Program has been a very successful seven year partnership in the prevention of deaths that could occur in winter weather. Since the program's inception, it has doubled in the number of sites and the number of individuals served. During the seven years of operation, the state building code has remained the same, however, this year there were some building safety issues noted at some of our hypothermia prevention sites during their annual site visit. These issues created confusion and angst in the community as the program has been operating for seven years and participants did not understand the changing expectations and oversight. The meeting on April 22 provided an opportunity for the county and partners to share information and a chance for the community to express their concerns and offer suggestions for moving forward.

Chairman Bulova, Supervisor Cook, Pat Harrison, Rob Stalzer and Dean Klein expressed the county's deep gratitude to the faith community and nonprofits that partner with the county in the fight against homelessness noting that these organizations and their staff and volunteers have given their own time, facilities and resources, preventing deaths from hypothermia, providing case management to hundreds of clients, and moving individuals into permanent housing. They emphasized that the Board of Supervisors and Fairfax County remain committed to sheltering vulnerable people in the county and continuing the Hypothermia Prevention Program.

Amanda Andere spoke about the importance of this partnership and how critical it is for the county, the non-profits and the faith based organizations to communicate and work in an ongoing collaborative and cooperative manner as we move forward so that this program can continue to be the outstanding success it is.

During an overview of the history of the program, it was noted that as the Hypothermia Prevention Program has grown significantly over time, the county has struggled with the issue of meeting the requirements of a stringent state code while also providing safe shelter for the homeless in the winter. It was acknowledged that as the county grappled with reconciling some of these challenges during this past hypothermia season, it could have proceeded more

strategically and communicated better with program partners along the way. Chairman Bulova, Supervisor Cook and County staff re-iterated their commitment to continuing the program and to do so through improved communications and processes and solicited comments and questions from the audience.

Next steps/outcomes identified at or resulting from the meeting/discussion included:

1. All current partners/organizations that participate in the Hypothermia Prevention Program will be allowed to continue in the program for the 2012-2013 season. The county will work in partnership with all providers, and in particular with those that don't currently meet the state building code requirements, to determine ways in which to operate the program and ensure safety.
2. The county will re-visit and work individually with each house of worship and facility to determine issues with meeting state code regulations in time for the 2013-2014 season. Detailed reports will be provided to each facility that specifies the results of the visits and technical assistance will be provided to help our partners decide on next steps. It is anticipated that site visits will begin the week of May 21, 2012. As promised at the meeting, the site visits will be arranged 7-10 days in advance.
3. The county committed to confirming that we have the correct points of contact for each program to ensure the appropriate people are aware of and will attend the site visit for their organization.
4. Ellen Eggerton, Ombudsman for Religious and Community Groups in Land Development Services was identified as the single point of contact for participating programs with regard to arranging specific site visits. Her contact information is ellen.eggerton@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-1861, TTY 711.
5. Ellen vanHully-Bronson, Public Works, will serve as the Program Manager responsible for ensuring that processes for upcoming site visits and any subsequent follow-up are well coordinated and communicated, internally and externally. Her contact information is ellen.vanhully-bronson@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-9451, TTY 771.
6. Debbie Scaggs, Office to Prevent and End Homelessness, continues to be the contract coordinator of the program and the point of contact for hypothermia programmatic questions, concerns and suggestions. Her contact information is debbie.scaggs@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-2307, TTY 711.
7. A communications team was established that included county staff and the Hypothermia Prevention Program's non-profit partners. This team's goal is to develop

communications that provide transparency, clarity and regular and specific status updates of the upcoming site visits. As a part of the communication effort, this web page has been established and it will allow for everyone to have regular access to this changing information. We encourage you to continue to check the website for status updates and progress.