



Homeless Infirmary Project Will Continue Helping Patients Recover

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PORTLAND, Ore. - Charles, 39, was on the verge of homelessness and battling a potentially life-threatening disease. The temperature in Portland had taken a dive and his health could have suffered had he slept outside in the cold, on the streets. Luckily there is a place for Charles and others like him who need in-home care but don't have a home: The Homeless Infirmary Project (HIP), an innovative program of The Salvation Army and Oregon Health & Sciences University.

"The infirmary kept me out of the cold. It got me motivated to get my stuff together. It gave me a home base until I could get housing and other stuff together," Charles said. Charles does not want his last name used. He was given the care and medication he needed at the Homeless Infirmary Project until he could take care of himself. Charles stayed through mid-December and has since moved into an apartment.

The Homeless Infirmary Project, located in the Salvation Army Harbor Light Center, 30 S.W. Second Ave., Portland, started as a six-month pilot program to help homeless people recover after a hospital stay. It has proved successful and will remain open thanks to community support and donations.

Since opening in October, the HIP has helped more than 40 men and women recover in a safe and clean environment. It is staffed by volunteers and funded through donations. More than 25 OHSU volunteers provide health care. The Salvation Army provides the infirmary space as well as meals, snacks, cleaning service and clean sheets.

"Among the challenges facing our homeless hospital has been the need for a safe, secure environment where they can fully recover from illness or injury. The Homeless Infirmary Project shows what we can do as a community to help provide health care to those most in need," said OHSU President Peter Kohler, M.D. Kohler and Major Kenneth Hodder, who was the divisional commander of The Salvation Army Cascade Division at the time, co-created the infirmary project.

Although the final report and evaluation is not complete, the program team has seen much success in serving clients, attracting volunteers and cooperative planning with The Salvation Army on all aspects of in-home care for the homeless.

"The lessons from this initial phase cause us to continue the program. We are gratified that close teamwork with the Salvation Army and OHSU discharge planners has allowed us to fill a specific need. We have worked closely with community partners to understand needs in the continuum of care for the homeless. This next level of commitment to HIP will allow us to continue to serve clients and to understand how many and what resources are needed in the future," said Marna Flaherty-Robb, R.N., M.S.N., C.N.S., associate dean of the OHSU School of Nursing and HIP project manager.

Just this week the coordinator and back-up R.N. positions were formally funded through philanthropic

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donations. In the next phase HIP will be looking for ways of obtaining more sustainable funding. The Salvation Army, the OHSU School of Nursing and Kohler are working together on this fundraising effort. The project team is also evaluating whether to expand to include other community partners, health systems and other sources of volunteers.

"We are working toward a solid outcome. We're seeing some good outcomes. By working through their medical issues, we can then work on homeless issues," said Lt. Ron Owens, administrator of Harbor Light Center.

The HIP is one of fewer than 30 projects nationwide. It provides a compassionate and cost-effective way to care for homeless people who need medical care but whose conditions do not require hospitalization. It has been supported by a variety of community donations including Kaiser Permanente Northwest, PGE Foundation and others, and will continue to seek volunteers and donations.

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