

Fairfield respite care home helps those in need

By Ryan McCarthy

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Kenrick Wharff sits in his bedroom at a Transitional Care Program Center home in Fairfield, Jan. 22. The program helps homeless after they leave a local hospital so they are not immediately discharged into the streets. (Aaron Rosenblatt/Daily Republic)

FAIRFIELD — A new respite care home to help the homeless after they leave a local hospital isn't only for the elderly – but older people will benefit from the program.

“The older someone is, the more likely they are to be hospitalized,” said Joanie Erickson of the Solano Coalition for Better Health.

The new transitional care program center, a two-story house along Falcon Drive in Fairfield looks like another home in the neighborhood.

Kenrick Wharff, 72, who has been staying at the site since late December, praised the transitional care program.

“Everything is good here,” he said. “Everybody lives like a happy family.”

Erickson said the respite program means that rather being discharged back onto the street, clients recover in the home for up to six weeks.

The program also addresses medical and other needs that often lead to continued homelessness, she said.

People receive help locating permanent housing and getting health care coverage before finishing the program.

Erickson said the program helps people recover from hospitalizations and reduced re-admissions. That saved an estimated \$2 million in health resources last year, she said.

A man struck by a car on New Year's Eve is among the people assisted by respite care. So was a woman with a broken rib and ruptured spleen.

Ebbie Saguil, operations manager for the respite program, spoke about what is not part of transitional care.

“We are not a homeless shelter,” he said. “We are not a drug rehabilitation facility.”

Ages of people served by the program have ranged from 18 to 80, he said.

“We’ve had 18-year-olds who’ve left home” and then are injured in a car accident, Saguil said.

Saguil said the program lets neighbors know about its operations but doesn’t try to bring attention to the site.

A maximum of five clients reside at a respite home. The new Fairfield facility, a four-bedroom, two-bath house, complements an existing home in Vallejo.

Part of the benefits of the Fairfield site, said Saguil, is that it’s close to NorthBay Medical Center.

Solano County Health and Social Services, Kaiser Permanente, NorthBay Healthcare and Sutter Health are partners in the program.

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