

Housing Opportunities Action Council

Lead Administrator: Summary Report

Benton County and the City of Corvallis have contracted with United Way of Benton & Lincoln Counties to serve as the backbone organization, and host the position of Lead Administrator (aka, Program Manager) for HOAC from November 1, 2016 through June 30, 2019. Shawn Collins began serving in this role November 1, 2016.

Following is a summary report of the activities of the Program Manager, March-April 2019.

Project Updates

HOAC Planning: The Corvallis City Council and Benton County Board of Commissioners met in a joint session April 9, and reviewed the proposed organization and bylaws, and a draft intergovernmental agreement (IGA). No vote was taken at the meeting, but there was general support to continue the effort, and direction to City/County staff to continue to work through various details related to funding and staffing. Community comments shared at the meeting raised questions about whether the new structure provided enough representation for community non-profits, and whether the process of reorganization has been transparent, and inclusive of voices from the downtown community.

Linn-Benton Vulnerable Populations: The Linn-Benton Vulnerable Populations group, headed by Loren Emang of Benton County Environmental Health, met in March, and received a presentation from Steve Napack on CERT, the Benton County Community Emergency Response Team. CERT programs are available in many communities. CERT volunteers are trained in basic disaster response skills, and assist professional responders in the event of emergency. The next meeting is scheduled for May 23, and is likely to include some review of responses during the recent flooding.

Cold Weather Shelter: The Corvallis Men's Shelter closed the normal season on April 1, having served 179 unique individuals, for a total of 6486 "bed nights." The month of February was the busiest month, with 18 of 28 days at capacity. Over the month of March, attendance drops as the weather improves, but was still between 30-40 nightly. A lease for next year's operation in the location at 211 SE Chapman is still in negotiation with the building owner.

On April 10, approval was granted by the City of Corvallis to re-open the Men's and Women's shelters on an emergency basis, to serve those displaced by flooding. 31 men stayed at the Shelter between April 10-15, with a total of 99 bed nights. Room at the Inn, the Women's Shelter, was open only 2 nights, and served 2-3 women. Dave Busby, Emergency Planner for the City of Corvallis has asked me to provide a debrief on the emergency operations at an upcoming meeting with emergency management personnel. While the Shelter's operations in "emergency mode" went well, coordination among agencies was challenged, and the need to better integrate Shelter organizations and other agencies into community emergency response is clear.

Thanks to the staff and volunteers who stepped in quickly to re-open the Corvallis Men's Shelter and Room at the Inn, on short notice. Thanks as well to the City of Corvallis, for their prompt action to approve a re-opening, and their flexibility as conditions changed. In my recent discussion with Dave Busby, it's clear there is room for improvement in how we handle something like this emergency opening, and coordination of efforts across town, but it was a great test, and all involved are to be commended for their effort.

Trauma-Informed Care: Benton County Health Department, in collaboration with Oregon Family Support Network, is hosting a free Trauma Informed Care training on May 21, from 9-4:30 at the Benton County Sunset Building. See <https://conta.cc/2QjTF0E> to register. As I mentioned in my March report, I recently attended this training, and highly recommend it. I also recommend a book I learned about in the training: *The Deepest Well: Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Adversity*, by Nadine Burke Harris, M.D. The book is available at the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library, and is well worth a read. Dr. Harris presents a compelling case for the health impacts of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and goes

through not only the brain science involved, but the challenges of getting the impact of ACEs to be acknowledged, and getting screening for ACEs incorporated into standard medical procedure. If you can't read the book, take a look at Dr. Harris' TED Talk from 2014:

https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine_burke_harris_how_childhood_trauma_affects_health_across_a_lifetime?language=en