



MEDIA RELEASE

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Local street outreach program launched in Ottawa County

October 24, 2017 – On October 1, Community Action House launched Ottawa County's first street outreach program for people experiencing homelessness. The program is designed to reach individuals and families living in places not meant for human habitation, such as campgrounds, parks and cars. Funding for this program is provided by an Emergency Solutions Grant from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

Jessica Rodriguez-Garza, Homeless Outreach Specialist at Community Action House, conducted months of research in order to construct a program that would meet the needs of people living in unsheltered locations around the county. As part of her research on best practices, Jessica shadowed outreach workers with Arbor Circle and Mel Trotter Ministries who regularly provide outreach services to persons experiencing homelessness.

The street outreach program focuses on building relationships and connecting individuals and families with resources and permanent housing. In addition to building relationships, Jessica's role will be to survey and assess needs – vital information that will help equip local agencies to serve this population effectively. She will also provide engagement packets to those in need. These packets will include

information about resources, hygiene essentials and seasonally appropriate supplies.

Community Action House (CAH) is a founding member of the Lakeshore Housing Alliance (LHA) (a program of Greater Ottawa County United Way), a collaboration of housing service providers dedicated to providing safe, affordable and accessible housing to residents of Ottawa County. CAH is eligible to apply for ESG funds through the LHA because of its membership and commitment to ending homelessness.

CAH is seeking volunteers interested in working with homeless and precariously housed individuals in our community. Volunteers are needed to accompany Jessica during outreach efforts. No experience is necessary – just a spirit of openness to others and willingness to serve individuals who may be falling through the cracks in our community. For more information and to apply, contact us at volunteer@communityactionhouse.org or call (616) 392 2368.

About Community Action House

Founded in 1969, Community Action House is a local non-profit serving the greater Holland, Michigan area, whose purpose is to end poverty in our community and help families prosper. By providing local families with food, clothing, shelter, financial education, & empowerment, the agency seeks to increase financial stability and capacity for prosperity. Visit communityactionhouse.org to support and get involved.

About Greater Ottawa County United Way

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER. LIVE UNITED. Greater Ottawa County United Way supports, develops and implements a range of impact solutions that improve lives and create stronger communities. Learn more at www.OttawaUnitedWay.org.