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LOCAL NON-PROFITS JOIN TOGETHER TO PROVIDE WARM, SAFE EMERGENCY SHELTER TO FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Grand Rapids, MI. A group of local nonprofits and businesses have teamed up to help families in our community who are experiencing homelessness. The Fulton Manor Emergency Family Shelter will provide a warm, safe place to stay for up to 75 families at a time and opened February 4, 2019.

Over the course of the year, the Fulton Manor Emergency Family Shelter is expected to shelter more than 400 families with children. The process for families needing emergency shelter will remain the same. Families will be referred to the shelter through United Way's 2-1-1 and Salvation Army Housing Assessment Program. In addition to a place to sleep, the Emergency Family Shelter will provide food, clothing, diapers and supportive services to help families transition to housing.

The Fulton Manor Emergency Family Shelter is not intended as a permanent solution to family homelessness. Rather it is a one-year, stop-gap measure to address a growing crisis in family homelessness here in Kent County. As the cost of living continues to rise in West Michigan, more and more families are unable to afford housing or face lapses in housing.

Facts on Family Homelessness in Grand Rapids:

- More than 100 families with children are on a waiting list for emergency shelter.
- Over 70% of families seeking shelter are employed and have income, but cannot afford the cost of living in West Michigan.
- Two thirds of those staying in shelters are children, most 6 years old or younger.
- According to a United Way ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) report, 38% of Kent County residents struggle to afford their basic needs.

The Fulton Manor project is a special collaboration between Holland Home, Family Promise of Grand Rapids, Kids' Food Basket, and United Way. Holland Home has provided the facility, facility staff and some hot meals, Family Promise is providing the shelter, basic needs and rehousing services, Kids' Food Basket is supplying a portion of the family meals, while Heart of West Michigan United Way is offering significant funding, volunteer coordination and

connections with local businesses. United Way will also act as the fiduciary. The effort is also supported by Degage Ministries, Inner City Christian Federation, Mel Trotter Ministries, the Salvation Army and the Coalition to End Homelessness, along with many private foundations and other funders.

“We know who these hard-working families are,” said Michelle Van Dyke, President/CEO of Heart of West Michigan United Way. “These are our ALICE families who are working and doing everything right, but simply can’t make ends meet. Given our mission and passion for this community we wanted to be part of this solution.”

The Fulton Manor property has been provided to the project partners on a one-year lease by Holland Home. “When we learned about the number of homeless families in our community we knew our Fulton Manor space could be the solution,” said Mina Breuker President and CEO of Holland Home. “There were over 70 families with young children who needed a place to sleep, and our building was going to be vacant. It seemed like a win-win.”

“Sixty five percent of individuals who are sheltered at Fulton Manor are children, and we believe a strong West Michigan depends on strong kids and families,” shares Afton DeVos, Chief Operating Officer at Kids’ Food Basket. “This partnership is a tremendous opportunity to provide the most basic necessities for any family; food and shelter, further extending our mission of nourishing children to thrive.”

“No one agency can solve the complex issue of family homelessness. That’s why this short-term solution is working. Many different entities are coming together to help children and families,” said Cheryl Schuch, Executive Director at Family Promise.

“In addition to this emergency shelter there is a large-scale community conversation with KConnect taking place to ensure our community has a plan going forward,” Schuch said.

The Emergency Family Shelter needs support from the community in the form of monetary gifts, in-kind donations and volunteers. The project will provide many service opportunities, including during [nightly dinner service](#).

To support the Fulton Manor Emergency Family Shelter go to www.hwmuw.org/fultonmanor