



### **Community Education**

Josh Sabo has had opportunities to share about the work of Heartland HOUSED and the Heartland Continuum of Care with several community partners and interested groups:

- April 8 - Sangamon County Board Meeting Presentation
- April 10 - UIS Social Work Cohort taught by Dr. Eric Hadley-Ives
- May 1 - SIU School of Medicine Grand Rounds

### **Continuum of Care Capacity Building**

- Our final two Supportive Housing Learning Labs were held in April and May with the Corporation of Supportive Housing providing full day trainings on best practices for case management to local partners. Each lab had between 20 and 30 participants. Out of these Learning Labs we are launching a new Supportive Housing Task Group where we will provide ongoing training and support for case management staff across the HCoC.



### **Old Towne Collaboration**

- HCoC partners provided assistance to 36 households as they left the Old Towne apartments and found new places to live. Our new Housing Problem Solving Specialist, Shymeka Kerr, did a great job helping to answer resident's questions and help them connect to agencies that could help.

### **Advocacy**

- Josh got the opportunity to spend a day at the IL State Capital in April with local partners and the Supportive Housing Provider's Association to talk about the impact state funding has had on our community.



- In May, Josh joined the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce's DC Fly-in to meet with our U.S. Congress Representatives. Sangamon County Chairman Andy Van Meter and Josh also met with Norm Suchar, Director of HUD's Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs, to discuss the work that has taken place in our community since 2019.



### **Projects and Ongoing Efforts**

- The State of Illinois FY25 Emergency Solutions Grant and Homelessness Prevention grants were allocated through the Heartland Continuum of Care Board. The HCoC Homelessness Prevention Grant increased to \$400,000 this year, up from \$89,000 in FY22.
- The 100 Day Challenge to Address Unsheltered Homelessness ended in late May with a Sustainability Summit in Joliet. More details in IT Article.
- Heartland HOUSED Audit. We have been in talks with Eck, Schafer, and Punke and should know more soon about timetable for audit completion.
- System Support Specialist position posted this week.
- Efforts ongoing to develop the HMIS side of the Heartland Housing Help Line, we have soft launched the program at this time.
- Website development progress and App development exploration.

### **June 3rd Illinois Times Article written by Josh Sabo**

<https://www.illinoistimes.com/arts-culture/100-day-challenge-results-in-29-entering-supportive-housing-18596398>

### **100 Day Challenge Focused on Unsheltered Homelessness Results in Twenty-Nine People Entering Supportive Housing**

Is it possible to support individuals who have experienced years of homelessness in connecting to permanent housing opportunities? What about those who are reluctant to engage services for a variety of reasons and are deemed to be the hardest to house?

A recent Heartland Continuum of Care (HCoC) effort saw twenty-nine individuals with a history of unsheltered homelessness end their homelessness and enter supportive housing in 100 days. During this same time period a total of forty-five households exited homelessness and entered permanent housing supported by HCoC organizations.

Heartland Continuum of Care partners concluded a 100-Day Challenge focused on better understanding and addressing the challenges connected to unsheltered homelessness on May 22nd. Cohorts in Springfield, Rockford, Suburban Cook County, and Will County participated in the challenge with technical support from RE!INSTITUTE and the Supportive Housing Providers Association. The initiative was made possible through the State of Illinois' Office to Prevent and End Homelessness.

The effort kicked off in February with twelve people from Heartland HOUSED, Helping Hands, Washington Street Mission, Memorial Behavioral Health, SIU, volunteer outreach efforts, and local leaders with lived experience attended a two-day summit in Joliet. The team of partners coordinated efforts through weekly meetings and integration with ongoing HCoC Task Groups focused on Street Outreach, Coordinated Entry, and Supportive Housing.

There are many complex factors that contribute to people in our community living without shelter. Strategies to effectively connect people who are unsheltered to resources require consistent coordinated outreach, relationship and trust building, strong collaboration across partners, and access to services necessary to provide complex care. Connected to this are the Heartland Continuum of Care's efforts to build and maintain a by-name list of all people experiencing homelessness in Sangamon County.

Assessing existing community efforts, identifying gaps in service, and experimenting with solutions were at the core of the 100 Day Challenge goals. During the challenge, local organizers aimed to work with 100 people experiencing unsheltered homelessness or with a history of unsheltered homelessness with the goal of helping ninety percent access the HCoC Coordinated Entry System and fifteen percent entering supportive housing during the challenge. An additional goal was to support twenty-five percent of those engaged in accessing complex care services to address physical and mental health care, psychiatric care, and substance use and harm reduction services.

Innovation and experimentation were keys to making progress and improving on existing Street Outreach efforts. Our community is fortunate to have community initiatives like Springfield Police Department's Homeless Outreach Team, the Springfield Empower Equip and Deflect program, and volunteer outreach efforts in the community. The challenge is to ensure all these efforts work hand-in-hand to provide housing focused services and referrals necessary to assist people in ending their homelessness.

During the 100 Day Challenge, collaboration across these efforts was improved through new Outreach training resources, the development of an Outreach Map, and an experimental Outreach Tool designed for ease of use for volunteers to share information and make referrals to services. Another goal was to incorporate people with lived experience of homelessness in outreach efforts. Heartland HOUSED leads regular outreach outings and compensates people with lived experience for their participation in street outreach.

At the end of the challenge, twenty-nine individuals entered housing opportunities paired with rental subsidy support and case management services that work to help people stabilize in housing, increase their income, and connect to any community based services that are needed. Sixty-three individuals completed Coordinated Entry assessments that put them on the pathway to supportive housing in our community. Partners involved in the effort celebrated seeing people they have engaged with, in some cases for more than five years, accept supportive housing opportunities and enter into their own apartments.

The challenge ahead is how to sustain progress made while continuing growth and innovation. A significant part of the success made during the challenge was due to growth in the number of supportive housing opportunities available in our community, funding is needed to continue growth in local Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Rehousing programs so more households can exit homelessness through these programs. While Street Outreach efforts have improved in our community, there is a need for additional devoted Street Outreach staff to assist in collaborative efforts. Availability of complex care services to provide ongoing support for people who are in supportive housing programs continues to be a need identified by local case managers working to help households achieve stability in permanent housing.

Heartland HOUSED and the Heartland Continuum of Care continuously strive to make progress on Springfield and Sangamon County's 2022-2028 Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness. The 100 Day Challenge has accelerated progress in several areas to that end while also identifying challenges and gaps where improvements must be made so our community can continue building a more effective and equitable system to functionally end homelessness in our community.