



Entry Form 2017 Annual Awards for Program Excellence

Entry Deadline: Thursday, June 15, 2017, Midnight ET

Each entry must include a completed entry form. Please complete a form for each entry your HFA is submitting. The completed entry form will become the first page of your entry.

This form is a fillable PDF. Type your information into the entry form and save it as a PDF. Please do not write on or scan the entry form. **Questions: Call 202-624-7710 or email awards@ncsha.org.**

Entry Title: Enter your entry's title exactly as you wish it to be published on the NCSHA website and in the awards program.

Category:

Subcategory:

Entry Summary: A 15-word (max) summary of the program, project, or practice you are entering.

HFA:

HFA Staff Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Visual Aids:

Are you mailing to NCSHA 10 copies of any visual aids that cannot be included in your entry PDF? Yes No

Payment:

My HFA is mailing a check to NCSHA.
My HFA is emailing the credit card authorization form to awards@ncsha.org.

Michigan State Housing Development Authority
MSHDA's Statewide Campaign "Pledge to End Veterans Homelessness"
Special Needs Housing/Combating Homelessness

Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) enhances economic and community vitality through housing and historic preservation activities, and provides financial and technical assistance through public and private partnerships to create and preserve safe and decent affordable housing for the people of Michigan.

MSHDA's mission is currently tied to three major goals that call for specific tangible objectives:

Goal #1: Building Financial Solvency to Advance Mission

Goal #2: A Roof for Every Homeless Veteran

Goal #3: Improving the Customer Experience

Advance Agency Mission and Achieve Strategic Objectives

In focusing on Goal #2: A Roof for Every Homeless Veteran, MSHDA's various programs and services achieved a significant degree of success. In 2015, just over 4,400 veterans experienced homelessness, a 21% reduction from the previous year. During this time about 2,800 (64%) of these veterans were placed in permanent housing while another 400 veterans were housed in transitional housing. These numbers mean that 3,200 of Michigan's homeless veterans had a place to call home.

Born of the attitude, "While that's a good start, it is not good enough," MSHDA launched an aggressive, high-profile, statewide "Michigan's Pledge to End Veteran Homelessness." The campaign aimed to bolster awareness of the efforts to help veterans experiencing homelessness and assist housing assessment and resource agencies (HARA) in strengthening support from local community leaders, politicians, business owners, faith-based organizations, landlords, volunteers and others.

Effectively Employing Partnerships Statewide

Over a six month period, MSHDA and the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency partnered with the statewide Continuum of Care network to take the pledge and the message regarding veteran homelessness to numerous communities. Also supporting and actively joining the campaign were key advocacy groups including the following:

- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- U.S. Department of Labor
- United States Interagency Council on Homelessness
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
- Michigan State Senators and Representatives
- County Administrators and Commissioners
- County Veterans Affairs Agencies
- County Community Health Authorities
- City Mayors and Councilmembers
- All Major Veteran Organizations

In total, all 83 Michigan counties were touched by the campaign, bringing awareness of the issue to thousands of people, including local public officials, partnering organizations, and concerned citizens. In addition, citizens and community leaders literally signed the following pledge to end veteran homelessness:

Michigan State Housing Development Authority
MSHDA's Statewide Campaign "Pledge to End Veterans Homelessness"
Special Needs Housing/Combating Homelessness

WE PLEDGE TO END VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

We believe housing is a human right and that every veteran deserves a place to call home.

We pledge to address every veteran's individual housing needs in Michigan and rally our community's support.

Through community effort we can house all veterans experiencing homelessness – working to serve them as they served us.

The pledge was also made available online at the MSHDA website for individuals who were interested into signing on to the commitment.

Effective Use of Resources, Innovation, and Replicable

The pledge campaign brought invaluable attention and publicity to the plight of homeless veterans and to homeless solutions available through MSHDA and other statewide programs. Media coverage was widespread and enthusiastic as radio, TV, and print/online news outlets reported on the campaign.

The team effort among MSHDA, the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency, and Continuum of Care network aided in the cost effectiveness of the outreach effort. One MSHDA staff person coordinated the itinerary and relied on local partners to make the logistical arrangements at each stop, thus successfully sharing the workload in planning and executing the campaign stops.



RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN STATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

KEVIN ELSENHEIMER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

6/29/2016

Dear CoC Chairpersons, Coordinators, Veteran Initiative Lead Worker, HARAs and Fiduciaries,

Re: Communities Working Together to End Veteran Homelessness

As you know MSHDA and the Michigan Veteran Affairs Agency (MVAA) are partnering with CoCs statewide to end Veteran homelessness. To assist you in reaching this goal leadership from MSHDA and MVAA will be taking this message on the road to every CoC in Michigan beginning in July through September. We will be coming to one of your CoC meetings during this time period to bring together State Departments, CoC members and local leaders to rally efforts throughout your community.

The goal of this event is to bolster support for Veterans experiencing homelessness and to assist HARA's in getting the backing from community leaders, local politicians, business owners, faith-based organizations, landlords, volunteers, etc. to maximize the availability of quality rental housing and to provide the assistance and needed services.

MSHDA and MVAA will present a pledge to End Veteran Homelessness for attendees to sign. This pledge will remain with the community. In addition, MSHDA and MVAA will coordinate the event with your CoC leadership. MSHDA will send out a press release to help engage the community.

To date, MSHDA and MVAA have worked with five CoCs; Detroit, Ingham, Kent, Oakland, and Washtenaw; and have scheduled their community's "Ending Veteran Homelessness" event. For all other Planning/CoC Bodies, your MSHDA Specialist will be contacting you soon, but in the interim, please work together to strategize how your community will get the most out of this event. For example:

- How will your community get current/new landlords to this event?
- Who could touch base with mayors, county commissioners, township officials?
- Are there certain business leaders that might assist financially or with donations?
- Could faith-based organizations and other volunteer groups in your community be helpful?





RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN STATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

KEVIN ELSENHEIMER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Stay tuned for more information from your MSHDA Specialist on the Ending Veteran Homelessness event coming to your area.

Should you have any questions, please e-mail your MSHDA Homeless Assistance Specialist.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly Rose".

Kelly Rose
Chief Housing Solutions Officer
Chair, Michigan Interagency Council on Homelessness



MICHIGAN'S PLEDGE TO END VETERAN HOMELESSNESS SCHEDULE

Additional dates/locations are to be added and updates will be sent periodically

MSHDA and the Michigan Veteran Affairs Agency are partnering with Continuum of Cares around the state to end Veteran homelessness

SEPTEMBER

September 8, 2016	Saginaw 1:30 p.m.	United Way/Hoyt Public Library 505 James Avenue, 2 nd floor Saginaw, MI 48607
September 9, 2016	Shiawassee 9:45 a.m.	Memorial Healthcare, North Auditorium 826 W. King St., Owosso, MI
September 13, 2016	St. Joseph 8:00 – 9:15 a.m.	TBD
September 16 th	Allegan 12:00 p.m.	Allegan County Health & Human Services 3255 122 nd Avenue, #300, Allegan
September 20, 2016	Battle Creek/ Calhoun 12:00 p.m.	Grace Health (downstairs) 181 W. Emmett St., Battle Creek, MI
September 27, 2016	Central MI Arenac, Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella 9:00 a.m.	Mt. Pleasant Housing Commission 1 W. Mosher, Mt. Pleasant Downstairs meeting room
September 29, 2016	Ionia & Montcalm 1p.m.	Right Door 375 Apple Tree Drive Ionia, MI

October

October 4, 2016	Jackson 10:00 a.m. – Noon	Disability Connections Office 409 Linden Avenue, Jackson, MI
-----------------	------------------------------	---

9.29.2016

Michigan's Pledge to End Veteran Homelessness Schedule

Page 2

October--continued

October 5, 2016	Van Buren 3:00 p.m.	Van Buren Conference Center 701 S. Paw Paw, Lawrence, MI
October 6, 2016	Out Wayne 10:00 a.m.	Wayne Westland Corps Salvation Army 2300 S. Venoy Rd, Westland, MI
October 7, 2016	W. MI Housing Network Oceana, Mason Newaygo, Lake 9a.m.	True North 6308 S. Warner Ave, Fremont MI
October 10, 2016	Eaton 9:00 a.m.	Barry/Eaton Health Dept. 1033 Health Care Dr. Charlotte
October 11, 2016	Muskegon 4:00 p.m.	County Board of Commissioners Chambers 990 Terrace, 4 th Floor, Muskegon, MI
	Livingston 1 –2:30 p.m.	2300 E. Grand River, Conference Room D Howell, MI
October 12, 2016	Mecosta/Osceola 9:00 a.m.	Michigan Works 240 E. Church Street, Reed City, MI
October 13, 2016	Macomb 9:00 a.m.	MCA Conference and Training Center Robert Verkuilen Blvd., 21885 Dunham Road Clinton Township, MI 48036
October 19, 2016	Thumb CoC 9:30 – 10:30 a.m.	4675 Hill Street, Cass City, MI Lower level meeting room
October 20, 2016	Barry 9:00 a.m.	BCUW Office 231 S. Broadway, Hastings, MI
	Petoskey 10:00 a.m.	TBD
October 27, 2016	Hillsdale 8:30 a.m.	Hillsdale County ISD 310 W. Bacon St., Hillsdale, MI

9.29.2016

Michigan's Pledge to End Veteran Homelessness Schedule

Page 3

November

November 1, 2016	Cass 2:00 p.m.	Cass District Library, Cassapolis, MI
November 3, 2016	Region 1 Alger, Marquette, Schoolcraft, Baraga, Houghton, Keweenaw, Delta, Dickinson, Iron, Menominee	Ramada Inn, 412 W. Washington Marquette, MI 49855
	Clinton 10:00 a.m.	Clinton Co. Dept. of Health & Human Services 105 Tolles Dr., St. Johns, MI
	Manistee 9:00 a.m.	TBD
November 4, 2016	Ottawa (Lakeshore Housing) 2:45 p.m.	Fillmore Complex, 12220 Fillmore St. West Olive, MI
November 9, 2016	Berrien 9:00 a.m.	Niles Public Library 620 E Main, Niles, MI
	Genesee 9:00 a.m.	YMCA, 310 E. Third St., Flint, MI
	Kalamazoo 2:00 p.m.	Central Public Library 315 S. Rose, Van Deusen Room Kalamazoo, MI
	Traverse City 1:00 p.m.	Michigan Works
November 10, 2016	Region 2 1:00 p.m.	TBD
November 16, 2016	Washtenaw 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.	St. Joseph Mercy Ann Arbor Ellen Thompson Women's Health Center, Room 1 A/B, 5320 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti, MI 48197
November 17, 2016	Cadillac 1:00 p.m.	TBD

9.29.2016



RENTAL

RENTERS
LANDLORDS
HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM
PROPERTY MANAGERS
HOUSING AGENTS
PROJECT BASED VOUCHERS

[MSHDA](#) / [RENTAL](#)

Michigan's Veterans Pledge



We believe housing is a human right and that every veteran deserves a place to call home.

We pledge to address every veteran's individual housing needs in Michigan and rally our community's support.

Through community effort we can house all veterans experiencing homelessness—working to serve them as they served us.

MSHDA Veteran Homelessness Pledge Form

User Information

First Name

Last Name

Email

County of Residence

 ▼

Yes, you have my permission to forward my contact details to my local homeless service lead agency, the Continuum of Care, for additional assistance or resources.

Partner with Us

1. New landlords and rental units to partner with veteran housing programs.

2. Financial donation to sponsor a homeless veteran and their family with temporary rental assistance or household items in order to quickly house them.

3. New home goods to furnish rental units (furniture, beds, linens, kitchenware, etc.)

4. Volunteers to work with agencies that are housing veterans.

5. Promote the pledge within your community (family, friends, colleagues, faith groups, local civic leaders, social media, etc.)

6. Other?

* Spam Block: (What's this?)

Add "five" plus "eight" and type the numeric (integer) answer here:

Popular

Locators
Combined
Application for

About MSHDA

About MSHDA
Press Releases
Event Calendar
Contact MSHDA

Initiatives

Housing Choice
Vouchers
MiPlace

Performance

MSHDA Scorecard
Help Us Improve Our
Website

Stay Connected

Join Our
Mailing List

Rental Housing Programs
MI First Home
MI Next Home

Campaign to End Homelessness
StepForward

Translation Services



How to Report Fraud

How to File an ADA Complaint

MSHDA FOIA	MSHDA Home	State Web Sites
Office of Regulatory Reinvention	Consumer Privacy Policies and Practices	
Michigan.gov Home	ADA	Michigan News Policies

Copyright 2017 State of Michigan



MEDIA
ADVISORY

Contact: [Misty Miller](#)
MSHDA Communications
517-373-1858

September 20, 2016

Calhoun County Takes the Pledge to End Veteran Homelessness in 2016

*MSHDA and the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency are partnering with
Continuums of Care around the state to end veteran homelessness*

- What:** A pledge-signing ceremony to bolster awareness of the efforts to house veterans experiencing homelessness and assist housing assessment and resource agencies (HARA) in strengthening support from local community leaders, politicians, business owners, faith-based organizations, landlords, volunteers and others.
- When:** Tuesday, September 20th at 12:00 p.m.
- Where:** Grace Health, 181 West Emmett Street, Battle Creek, MI (Park Hill Conference Room, downstairs)
- Who:** Nicole Schalow, Michigan State Housing Development Authority
Lynn Hedges, MVAA

Huron Daily Tribune

<http://www.michiganstthumb.com/tuscola/article/Tuscola-officials-pledge-to-end-veteran-s-9983988.php>

Tuscola officials pledge to end veteran's homelessness

Published 3:37 pm, Wednesday, October 19, 2016



Thumb Area Continuum of Care members with Michelle Edwards, MSHDA; Jim McLoskey of Sen. Mike Green's office; State Rep. Edward Canfield; and Kate Logan, Region 6 Coordinator MI Veteran's Affairs Agency; following the signing of the pledge to end veteran's homelessness in Michigan.

CASS CITY — The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) and members of the Thumb Area Continuum of Care hosted the "Veteran's Roadshow" Wednesday. This event highlighted the important efforts of several community and state programs focusing on ending Veteran's homelessness throughout Michigan this year.

The program began with the YouTube video "Five Finger Death Punch-Wrong Side of Heaven" and continued with speakers providing overviews of available resources and programs including Alex Miller with Blue Water Center for Independent Living (SSVF), talking points on Michigan Veteran's Affairs Agency's efforts to end veteran homelessness presented by Kate Login, Region 6 Coordinator, followed by remarks from Michelle Edwards, MSHDA Homeless Assistance Specialist regarding their efforts to end veteran's homelessness.

Jim Mcloskey from Sen. Mike Green's office conveyed Green's support of these efforts and provided a resource booklet of Veteran's services to the group. State Rep. Edward Canfield of the 84th District was also in attendance and shared his appreciation of the efforts of this group in addressing the issue of veteran's homelessness and encouraged members to share their insights with his office.

Closing remarks were provided by Angila Heinitz, Thumb Area Continuum of Care chairman, who then encouraged the group to sign the pledge to end veteran's homelessness throughout Michigan and continue with this important work.

© 2017 Hearst Communications, Inc.

H E A R S T

Ingham county takes pledge to end veteran homelessness



By Christopher Lane | Posted: Thu 6:27 PM, Jul 21, 2016

Veteran Stanley Williams used to be homeless, but thanks to Lansing's Volunteers of America, he's back on his feet.

"I've never felt better in my life," says Williams.

During Williams' time at the VOA he was able to stay away from drugs and alcohol that troubled him before, and even worked his way to a bachelor's degree.

Now the VOA and other organizations are pledging to end veteran homelessness all together in Ingham county.

"One homeless veteran is one too many," says Kara Hope, an Ingham county commissioner in the 7th district.

The task starts with community leaders. Lansing mayor Virg Bernero spoke about getting people involved in community service, and asking people to work together. State representative Tom Cochran called for jobs to be created by small businesses and his role in getting money to groups like the VOA and veterans affairs from the state.

Then groups like the Michigan State Housing Development Authority are working to get state and federal funding to help create more housing for veterans across Michigan.

Rep. Tom Cochran says "I think that as a state, as a society, we owe that to the people who made the

sacrifices."

But it isn't easy. There aren't enough beds for every homeless veteran in Ingham county and it can take time for proposals to get through the legislature and translate to money for more.

But success stories like Stanley Williams inspire leaders and groups to keep the fight against homelessness going.

"Once you get yourself together... you're like a new person," Williams says. "And it's the best feeling in the world."

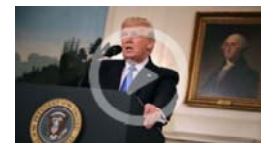
Williams says for homeless veterans to feel the same way, they need to look no further than these programs.



'Alt-Right'
Condemned By
Southern Baptist
Convention



The Long-Awaited
McGregor-
Mayweather Fight
Is Finally On



THE ALPENA NEWS

Reaffirming a pledge

Officials vow to help homeless veterans



News Photo by Jason Ogden Left to right, Michelle Smith of the Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency, Alpena Mayor Matt Waligoria, Hope Shores Alliance Housing Coordinator Debora Suszek and Michigan State Housing Development Authority Homeless assistance specialist Candace Morgan discuss veteran homelessness issues during a meeting Wednesday

ALPENA — More than a dozen area groups pledged to help homeless veterans Wednesday by signing a pledge card during a meeting of the Northeast Michigan Coalition to end Homelessness and Hunger.

The meeting was held at the St. Bernard's Friendship Room and featured a number of guest speakers, including Michigan State Housing Development Authority Homeless assistance specialist Candace Morgan.

She said several years ago there were directives to end all homelessness in the state, and said a special focus right now is ending homelessness for veterans.

Various stakeholders, including agencies, homeless shelter representatives and other groups, met at the meeting to reaffirm their pledge to help with the issue by signing a placard.

"We help them find houses and we pay to get them into those houses," she said. "We are dedicated to ending homelessness across the board, and our focus right now are the vets because they are our heroes."

MSHDA and other agencies are working to find them homes. According to Morgan, last year there were more than 4,400 homeless veterans.

"We were able to help decrease that number by 20 percent," she said.

One way was the development of the community *"by name list"* for veterans, she said.

"That means that every veteran in your community you know them by name and you're working to house them," she said. "And some communities are actually at functioning zero, that means that they know all of their veterans they have housed or they are working to get them housed."

Morgan said because all of the local agencies are involved with helping eliminate homelessness, the placard signing worked as an awareness

campaign to show the agencies are committed and to bring public awareness to the issue.

Morgan said a lot of veterans who come home are susceptible to homelessness because of wartime experiences.

“They’ve experienced some difficult traumas,” she said. “There is no reason that anyone who has served our country should be homeless for whatever reason. There are some people who may not have had family when they got home from overseas; we are that family for them.”

As far as homeless numbers locally, Debora Suszek, housing coordinator for Hope Shores Alliance, said there are area veteran homeless individuals.

“We have served in the last year, I would say in the last few months actually, four local veterans who are homeless and have had other issues,” she said.

Suszek said her agency serves anyone who may have abuse issues.

“What happens a lot of times veterans come back from wartime and they’re not all there and they need some help,” she said.

Jason Ogden can be reached via email at jogden@thealpenanews.com or by phone at 358-5693. Follow Jason on Twitter @jo_alpenanews. Read his blog, Sunny side up, with Jason at www.thealpenanews.com.

THE ALPENA NEWS



NEWS

Local News
Michigan
News
National
News
Obituaries

SPORTS

Local Sports
Michigan
Sports
National
Sports

OPINION

Editorials
and
columns
Letters to
the Editor

LIFE

Lifestyles
Engagements
Weddings
Anniversaries

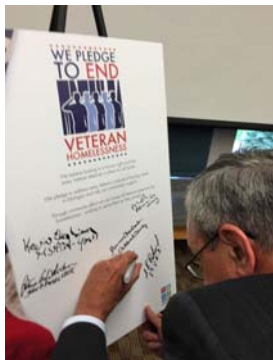
CONTACT

Submit
News
Subscribe
Advertise
Contact Us

Copyright © The Alpena News | <http://www.thealpenanews.com> | 130 Park Place,
Alpena, MI 49707 | 989-354-3111 | Ogden Newspapers | The Nutting Company

Pledge to house homeless Michigan vets needs landlords

Bill Laitner, Detroit Free Press Published 7:10 p.m. ET Sept. 7, 2016 | Updated 10:16 p.m. ET Sept. 9, 2016



(Photo: Bill Laitner)

In a meeting room down the hall from the office of Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson in Waterford, a dozen social service leaders from southeast Michigan and state government stepped forward Wednesday to — as they put it — “take the pledge.”

Each signed an easel-mounted placard that said, “We pledge to end veteran homelessness — we believe housing is a human right and every veteran deserves a place to call home.”

Their audience of about 50 peers applauded. It was one in a series of pledge signings, county by county around the state, arranged by a coalition of groups and led by MSHDA — the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

MSHDA officials hope to get groups from every county to sign the pledge by year-end, they said. A similar signing ceremony was held in Detroit in July and another is set for Friday in Monroe, with Macomb County yet to be scheduled, they said.

Wednesday’s signers included a supervisor from Oakland County Veteran Services, leaders of the Alliance for Housing — the county’s coalition of service agencies — as well as nonprofit agency bosses. Among them were Ron Borngesser, CEO of the Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency, and Ryan Hertz, CEO of the Lathrup Village-based South Oakland Shelter.

“I want to thank every single person here today for making Oakland County truly a place that is committed to ending veteran homelessness,” said Marc Craig, CEO of the Troy-based Community Housing Network and volunteer president of the Alliance for Housing board.

Yet missing from the gathering was a key group that agency leaders said needs to do more: landlords. In May, Patterson sent letters to 240 Oakland County landlords, “urging them to join the effort” by renting to veterans, Oakland County Veterans Services Supervisor Lauren Chamberlin said.

“To date, 12 landlords have reached out” to offer rental housing to veterans, Chamberlin said.

Badly needed are landlords “willing to recognize that many of the veterans are going to have a rougher background and to show more discretion than they might otherwise show” in renting to them, said Kelly Rose, head of MSHDA’s division of rental assistance and homeless solutions.

In Oakland County, most landlords charge too much for veterans to afford with their housing-subsidy “vouchers” issued by MSHDA with federal funding, Rose said. And in Wayne County, much of the available housing is substandard, “somewhere no one would want to live,” added Patricia Wolschon, director of homeless programming at the John D. Dingell VA Medical Center in Detroit.

There are on any given day about 400 veterans with a housing subsidy in hand, searching for housing across Michigan, officials said.

Detroit Free Press
PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Join for as low as

\$0.56/wk.

Learn More

(<http://offers.freep.com/specialoffer?>

gps-

source=BEAZjun&utm_medium=agilityzone&utm_source=bounce-exchange&utm_campaign=agilityzone)

The VA hospital in Detroit wants to hear from “people who want to help, including landlords, or people who want to volunteer or donate home

furnishings," Wolschon said. They should go to www.Michigan.gov/mshdaVeteransPledge to sign up.

Contact Bill Laitner: blaitner@freepress.com

Read or Share this story: <http://on.freep.com/2cDjKZ0>

MUSKEGON NEWS

5 things to know about veteran homelessness, and Muskegon County's pledge



Updated on October 12, 2016 at 9:06 PM

Posted on October 12, 2016 at 4:02 PM



Judy Kell, coordinator for the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network, left, and Terry Sabo, chairman of the Muskegon County Board of Commissioners, pose for a photo next to the pledge board signed by some local officials. The pledge is to work to end veterans homelessness in Muskegon County. *(Contributed photo by Christine Robere)*

37
shares

BY ERIC GAERTNER

MUSKEGON COUNTY, MI - At one point earlier this year, a group identified a little more than 50 homeless veterans in Muskegon County.

That same group, the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network, helped line up housing for 20 of the veterans during a seven-month period.

To reach its ultimate goal and putting an end to veterans' homelessness in Muskegon County by the end of 2017, the group has put together an action plan in hopes of reaching the concept of "functional zero," a term introduced by the federal government because new individuals will always be falling into homelessness.

Representatives from the Muskegon County Homelessness Continuum of Care Network, the Michigan State Housing Development Agency and the Michigan Veteran Affairs Agency met with county officials Tuesday about the quest to end veteran homelessness. MSHDA and the Veteran Affairs Agency are partnering with Continuum of Care around Michigan in hopes of ending veteran homelessness.

County commissioners and a couple of other local governmental officials signed a pledge to end veteran homelessness. Judy Kell, coordinator for Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network, said the pledge board will be kept inside the county administrator's office and other local governmental officials are invited to sign onto the pledge.

Here are five things you need to know about goal to end veteran homelessness in Muskegon County:

1 - The specific goal is:

- No veteran is forced to sleep on the streets;
- When a veteran becomes homeless, it is rare and brief; and
- All currently homeless veterans will be housed or on a pathway to stable housing by the end of 2017.

2 - The primary strategy of the action plan, which also seeks to end chronic homelessness in the county, is to redesign Muskegon County's homeless response system so the system is less fragmented with the current independent programs. The planned redesign would transform the system so it would assist those homeless individuals from the first night they experience homelessness until the day they regain stability in independent housing.

3 - A total of 20 veterans were housed between April 1-Oct. 11, and 18 veterans received prevention services, such as utility assistance, back rent or housing repairs over that same time period.

4 - The lack of availability of one-bedroom rental units in the Muskegon community is slowing the process of housing homeless veterans. In an attempt to alleviate the problem, the group plans to work with the Land Bank to assist homeless veterans.

5 - Are you a veteran who needs assistance? Veterans can call Brandy Jacobs at Volunteers of America at 616-638-4431 for housing assistance and many other veteran services. Volunteers of America is located next to the West Michigan Veterans Center, 165 E. Apple Ave. Another resource is John Taylor, the veterans housing specialist at Community enCompass, which has funds for rental assistance and other services. He can be reached at 231-728-3117.

Registration on or use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [User Agreement and Privacy Policy](#)

© 2017 MLive Media Group. All rights reserved ([About Us](#)).

The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or otherwise used, except with the prior written permission of MLive Media Group.

[Community Rules](#) apply to all content you upload or otherwise submit to this site.

[▶ Ad Choices](#)



(Submitted photo)

Cass County joins statewide fight against veteran homelessness



[\(http://www.leaderpub.com/author/TedYoakum/\)](http://www.leaderpub.com/author/TedYoakum/)

By **Ted Yoakum** (<http://www.leaderpub.com/author/TedYoakum/>)

Email the author (<mailto:ted.yoakum@leaderpub.com>)

Published 9:55 am Thursday, November 3, 2016

Representatives with several Cass County housing and veteran advocacy organizations have enlisted their services in combating homelessness among former servicemen and servicewomen.

Nearly a dozen people signed a pledge to end veteran homelessness in Cass County during a meeting hosted by officials of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority Tuesday afternoon at the Cass District Library in Cassopolis. Representatives from MSHDA, as well as from the county department of health and human services, veteran's affairs and other local agencies, participated in the ceremony, signing their names to a large poster board containing the pledge a little more than a week before the nation celebrates Veterans Day on Friday, Nov. 11.

Cass County is one of 30 communities to participate in the MSHDA's recent initiative to reduce the number of homeless veterans in Michigan, said Nicole Schalow, a homeless assistance specialist with the statewide agency.

"We use the pledge ceremony as a way to thank our communities for their participation in the program as well as for their commitment to continue the effort to fight veteran homelessness, since it is an ongoing problem," Schalow said.

The veteran program was launched by MSHDA Director Kelly Rose nearly a year ago, in response to ongoing discussions at the state and federal level on how to address homelessness among veterans, Schalow said.

In Michigan, nearly 4,000 veterans were without homes in 2015, according to data from the MSHDA.

In January, officials with MSHDA asked county agencies that receive funding through the state authority to begin sending monthly updates on the condition of veterans living in their area, such as the number of new homeless veterans, how many are seeking housing and how many were successfully housed, Schalow said.

Through meetings such as Tuesday's pledge ceremony, officials with different local agencies can also connect and share strategies on how to work collaboratively to deal with the problem, Schalow said.

"I absolutely think that these pledges have helped spread the word about the amount of veteran agencies we have in Michigan," she said. "I think it will continue to spread the more we continue having conversations about the initiative."

Among those providing assistance to Cass County veterans are officials with Keystone Place, an agency that offers emergency housing and assistance to homeless people living in Cass and St. Joseph counties.

"I think the pledge is an awesome idea," said Kelli Tackett, director of the organization. "When we put the focus on veterans and attack the problem, it is going to help put an end on homelessness within that population."

Tackett encourages that veterans, or anyone else who is homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless contact the Cass County DHHS office at (269) 445-0229.

By using this website's user-contribution features, including comments, photo galleries, or any other feature, you agree to abide by the terms of use. **Please read this agreement in its entirety (/terms-of-use/)** because it contains useful information that will help you better understand the rules and general "good manners" that are expected when contributing content to this website.

COPYRIGHT

© 2017, Leader
Publications

THE MONROE NEWS

Dozens sign pledge to assist area's homeless veterans

By Dean Cousino

Monroe News staff reporter

CousinoDean

Posted Sep 9, 2016 at 8:00 AM

More than two dozen persons signed the pledge in a symbolic move to show support for local efforts to assist homeless veterans in Monroe County.

Julie Potratz, a Marine Corps veteran employed in the financial service industry, is concerned about the plight of homeless veterans in Monroe County.

“I myself am a veteran and am employed in the mortgage industry by someone (Jason Turner) who wants to focus his business on veterans,” she said. “We need to find out how we can help veterans.”

She was among more than two dozen people to sign a pledge Wednesday to work with the Monroe County Network on Homelessness and other local agencies to end homelessness for veterans. The ceremony took place just prior to the monthly meeting of the network at the Monroe County Community Mental Health Authority.

“We want to make sure the entire state is behind this,” said Stephanie Kasprzak, executive director of the Monroe County Opportunity Program (MCOP) and chairman of the network, encouraging others to sign the pledge.

The pledge reads: “We believe housing is a human right and that every veteran deserves a place to call home. We pledge to address every Veteran’s individual housing needs in Michigan and rally our community’s support. Through community effort we can house all veterans experiencing homelessness — working to serve them as they served us.”

The pledge is being taken to every county in Michigan as part of a statewide initiative to raise awareness about homeless veterans and to show support for each county’s efforts, said Nicole Schalow, homeless assistance specialist for the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA).

“This pledge will stay in your community,” Ms. Schalow told the network Wednesday. “We want to be positive and shine light on ending homelessness.”

Among those signing the pledge were Chris Miller and Lesli McCormick, case managers for veterans at the Salvation Army’s Monroe Harbor Light transitional center run, 3250 N. Monroe St. The center assists veterans with finding employment and housing.

“We provide mostly housing assistance and connect them to the VA (Veterans Administration), Social Security” and other agencies, Mr. Miller said.

Kathy Vanderbush, director of veterans’ affairs for Monroe County, also signed the pledge. Working by herself, she helps veterans obtain benefits and complete disability claims. Her office also has an emergency fund to assist veterans who qualify with paying rent and utilities.

Mrs. Vanderbush said her office can use all the support it can get. She is assisting a local veteran from Iraq and Afghanistan who has a wife and four children and is facing eviction from their home.

“Sometimes they fall through the cracks,” the director said. “We all work together to offer different resources ... the more resources we have, the less likely they will fall through.”

Veterans can contact her at 240-3287.

Michelle Swartz, director of emergency services for MCOP, said her office tracks veterans who stay at the four emergency shelters in the county like the Philadelphia House and other shelters like Harbor Light.

“It’s important to identify them. That’s the key to preventing eviction,” Ms. Swartz told the network.

In a 2015 report on homelessness among veterans, it was noted that 70 of them were housed at transitional shelters in the county and 21 at emergency shelters like Philadelphia House in Monroe.

In April, the county received a \$34,960 grant from MSHDA to assist veterans with rent payments. At least a half-dozen households have been helped so far with the funds with two more being processed, Ms. Swartz said. Money also was used to prevent evictions in two other cases, she said.

With another grant from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and received in 2011, the county has assisted nearly 170 veterans and their families with rental payments and security deposits to prevent their evictions, she said.

Monroe Mayor Robert Clark, Clerk Michelle LaVoy and Councilwoman Paula Whitman were among the local elected officials who signed the pledge.