



2013 Annual Awards Entry Form
(Complete one for each entry.)

A Comprehensive Approach to Veterans' Housing

Entry Name _____

Fill out the entry name <i>exactly</i> as you want it listed in the awards program.

HFA _____

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Entry form with description, check(s), and visual aids (optional) must be received by NCSHA by **Monday, July 1, 2013**.

Use this header on the upper right corner of each page.

HFA _____

Entry Name _____

Communications	Homeownership	Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation
<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Report <input type="checkbox"/> Promotional Materials and Newsletters <input type="checkbox"/> Creative Media	<input type="checkbox"/> Empowering New Buyers <input type="checkbox"/> Home Improvement and Rehabilitation <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging New Production	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal Advocacy <input type="checkbox"/> State Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources <input type="checkbox"/> Operations <input type="checkbox"/> Technology
Rental Housing	Special Needs Housing	Special Achievement	Are you providing visual aids?
<input type="checkbox"/> Multifamily Management <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation and Rehabilitation <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging New Production	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Combating Homelessness <input type="checkbox"/> Housing for Persons with Special Needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Achievement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

A Comprehensive Approach to Veterans' Housing Combating Homelessness

“Our veterans have made great sacrifices to serve our country, and we must honor their commitment. When they return from the battlefield, they shouldn’t have to battle on their own to get help and affordable housing,” said U.S. Senator Jack Reed.

Introduction

The statistics are staggering:

- 62,619 homeless veterans on a single night in January in the United States;
- While veterans represent only 7 percent of the American population, they make up 13 percent of the homeless population;
- Fifty percent of homeless veterans have a serious mental illness, and 70 percent are suffering from substance abuse problems;
- Of these homeless veterans, about 170 reside in Rhode Island.

Particularly vulnerable to the economy in Rhode Island are our very low-income groups like veterans. Our shelters are overwhelmed by the demand – numbers of homeless individuals and families continue to increase. The housing needs of these men and women who have served our country are similar to that of all homeless persons but require specialization given the experience of many veterans, especially those just returning from war. Eliminating homelessness among veterans has long been a focus of our state’s homelessness programs as well as programs at Rhode Island Housing. The recently adopted state plan to end homelessness, *Opening Doors Rhode Island*, formalized that focus by setting a goal of ending homelessness among Rhode Island veterans in five years. ***As a small state that has already dedicated a significant number of transitional and permanent supportive homes to assisting this key population, that goal is one that we feel is achievable.***

The Challenge

We all work in challenging environments to create safe, affordable homes, but when these homes are targeted toward this special population, numerous resources and services are required. Outreach and provision of services to chronically homeless veterans are particularly challenging. Many live (or remain hidden) within the extensive homeless shelter environment in Rhode Island. Significant planning has been applied to develop an outreach plan to serve this population successfully. The outreach plan targets chronically homeless veterans and long-term homeless veteran families, and incorporates several key strategies. While our state is fortunate to have social service providers who specialize in services for veterans, they need support and expertise in order to develop appropriate housing options.

Partnerships are Key to Success

Success can only be achieved through strong and diverse partnerships. Engaging organizations with both social service and development expertise and tapping into available funding streams ensure that veterans in need of homes also have the appropriate services to meet their unique needs. In partnership with these varied groups, Rhode Island Housing has developed a comprehensive approach to veterans housing, working with groups such as the Rhode Island Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), RI Veterans Affairs, HUD, R.I.’s Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) and nonprofit developers. Additionally, we are able to bring in the expertise of organizations such as our local VA Office, the Veterans Skilled Nursing Home in Bristol and the VA Hospital in Providence as well as other homeless support groups. Our development experience, combined with our partners’ service resources and ability to perform targeted outreach to veterans in need of housing and services, creates the perfect partnership to respond to the veterans’ needs.

Homes for Veterans

Providing safe, healthy, affordable homes for our veterans is a high priority for Rhode Island's 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan and Opening Doors RI, the state's new plan to end homelessness. Several recent developments for homeless veterans illustrate the many challenges, partnerships and blending of resources and services required. Within the past 18 months, this HFA has worked to develop a number of developments specifically targeted to the homeless veteran population.

Turning Point: A development located in our state's capital city provides a supportive housing community for veterans and their families. Vacant commercial buildings that were a blighting influence on the neighborhood have been transformed into homes for veterans, accompanied by lower-level commercial space that houses services for the veterans and a police substation. Turning Point provides 14 homes for very low-income veterans who are disabled and homeless or at risk of homelessness; 10 of the 14 apartments have been set aside for veterans who are chronically homeless. Supportive services for the residents are provided by RIVAC, which utilizes space on the first floor for assistance in obtaining VA benefits and healthcare, job placement services, workplace skills training, computer literacy courses, Activities of Daily Living (ADL) services, transportation, case management and referrals for mental health and substance abuse services.

Operation Stand Down: Established in 1993, Operation Stand Down Rhode Island's (OSDRI) mission is to combat homelessness among veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces by providing housing, educational, and financial resources and connecting them with vital human resources and social services. Celebrating its 20th Anniversary, OSDRI has been an innovative leader in the development of permanent and transitional housing for disabled homeless veterans since its inception in 1993. Two recent OSDRI developments include:

Pierce Street, Westerly – A \$1.3 million dollar multi-unit housing development for disabled and low-income veterans, the first of its kind in Washington County. The property, located in the North End of Westerly, will house 10 disabled veterans and host a drop-in center where veterans in need will have access to supportive services.

Johnston Reconstruction Initiative – OSDRI celebrated the completion of new service-enriched homes for veterans in April. The homes adjoin existing homes previously developed by OSDRI along with its headquarters and food pantry. All of the individuals served by the new development are homeless disabled veterans earning less than 50 percent Area Median Income. The veterans have access to supportive services, including case management, substance abuse counseling, job training and medical and psychiatric referrals, administered by Providence's VA Medical Center.

Ballou Harris House: A historic building that was unused and vacant at the time of rehabilitation for veterans' housing and previously owned by the State. The Ocean State Consortium at the Fogarty Center in Providence, a provider of various support programs for veterans in Rhode Island, approached the State Properties Committee and took possession of the property. The rehabilitation of the building included 10 dormitory-style rooms with two kitchens, shared decks and three bathrooms. Veterans pay 30 percent of their income to live there and have access to job training, counseling and other support provided through the Fogarty Center and its partners.

Veterans for Tomorrow: The adaptive reuse of a historic mill into 20 rental apartments for veterans who recently were homeless, or who are at risk of homelessness. The building will include employment training classroom space, and the developer has entered into a Housing Assistance Payment ("HAP") contract for 20 Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing ("VASH") vouchers from HUD and the VA. The vouchers provide rent subsidies and ensure that a full range of support services will be available to residents via the VA Hospital.

These developments provide much-needed low-cost housing for veterans who require significant services. Their proximity to retail, commercial and public transportation further enhance the benefits derived by the veterans who live there.

Conclusion

The model and partnerships described above recognize the fact that housing needs of veterans can be met by building homes that provide comprehensive supportive services. Programs which recognize and acknowledge the veteran experience are more helpful in assisting veterans make the difficult transition from highly structured service to our country to everyday life.

How the program responds to the judging criteria:

Innovative: The program embraces the supportive services model in conjunction with safe, affordable homes.

Replicable: This successful model is easily replicable and meets a growing need that most states face. Nationally, this population has grown dramatically in recent decades.

Responds to an important state housing need: With more servicemen and women returning from service every day and high housing costs outpacing wages, these developments and associated programs are critical. Veterans encounter the same difficult housing and economic conditions as others but with additional challenges based on their special needs.

Has a proven track record of success: Homes combined with services tailored to meet a specific population's needs have been proven time and again as effective in supplying the support required to fully integrate this population into the community. The emphasis of the program is on ensuring that there is an adequate supply of apartments, addressing the first and most pressing of needs: shelter. By addressing this need, the program frees service providers to concentrate on what they do best: assisting those who are homeless or at the brink of homelessness.

Provides benefits that outweigh costs: Benefits of providing a place to call home for those that have served our country cannot be measured in dollars.

Demonstrates effective use of resources: The program effectively taps into available funding streams from various partners targeted to these developments with appropriate services to ensure success.

Effectively employs partnerships: Local partnerships with service providers, veterans groups, housing partners and statewide advocates for housing and homeless issues have been forged and strengthened.

Achieves strategic objectives: Our efforts are a key component to keeping people, especially veterans and their families, in safe, healthy homes.

A Place to Call 'Home'


The greatest testament to the program's success is the stability it brings to the lives of veterans and their families.

For 14 years, Jim Connelly, an Army veteran, and his wife, Marilyn, struggled to find a safe, affordable place to live – moving back and forth from shelters to boarding houses, never finding a long-term housing solution. Now, with the help of Turning Point, the Connelys live in an affordable, two-bedroom apartment on the West End of Providence.

“We are now in a position where we have steady money coming in, allowing us to pay both our bills and the rent. We plan to attend the Homebuyer Education classes through Rhode Island Housing and are hopeful that we will soon be able to buy a home of our own.” – Jim Connelly

COUPLE FIND SECURITY IN HOUSING DEVELOPMENT FOR VETERANS

For 14 years, Jim Connelly, an Army veteran, and his wife Marilyn struggled to find a safe, affordable place to live – moving back and forth from shelters to boarding houses, never finding a long-term housing solution. Now, with the help of Turning Point, a housing development dedicated to providing housing for veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, the Connelys live in an affordable, two-bedroom apartment on the West End of Providence.



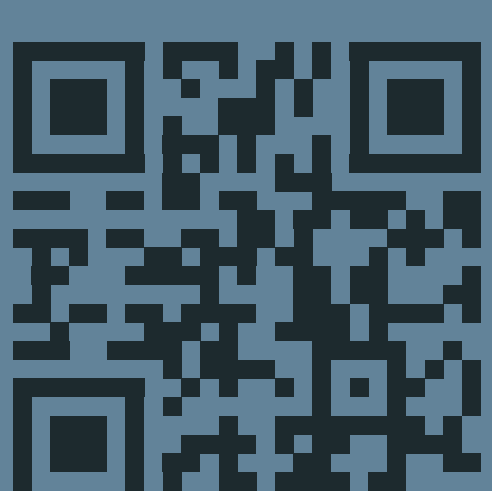
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– Jim Connelly

Did You Know?

Rhode Island Housing...

- Provided \$97 million to finance 621 affordable apartments in 2012
- Has helped 64,172 Rhode Island families buy a home
- Provided counseling or financial assistance to more than 6,000 homeowners in 2012
- Oversees more than 23,000 apartments
- Supported 470 households and prevented another 485 from becoming homeless through RoadHome programs.
- Supports KeepSpace to create communities where neighbors meet, people work and children play



To learn more about the many services Rhode Island Housing provides, visit www.rhodeislandhousing.org or call 401-457-1234.

