

Dream Homes Community Center

To: Mayor Mark Boughton and the City Council

From: Sharice Coleman and Heather Ely, Homeless and Housing Advocate

Re: June 24, 2013 Monthly Report

cc: ARC Executive Director & ARC Board of Directors

I. Program Synopsis

Per the proposal endorsed by Mayor Boughton and the City Council, Dream Homes Community Center (DHCC) was established at ARC to serve as the Point of Entry for people who are homeless or low-income renters and to facilitate first time home ownership for people with hard to serve backgrounds.

II. Program Updates

Sharice Coleman began her full time employment with ARC on June 3, 2013 as the Housing Advocate; and Case Manager for individuals who are or are at risk of being homeless. Heather Ely continues to work part time as the Housing Advocate and Case Manager for families who are homeless or at risk. Staffing is once again at full capacity.

III. Point of Entry

From July 1, 2012 until June 24, 2013, DHCC has provided services to 801 **people (125 individuals and 232 couples and families)** through the Point of Entry at ARC. The following is a breakdown of people served:

Town	July 2010 - June 2011	July 2011 - June 2012	July 1, 2012 - May 27, 2013
Danbury	535	592	565
Bethel	39	26	62
Brookfield	38	33	14
New Fairfield	25	34	22
New Milford	81	77	66
Newtown	17	4	16
Redding	6	7	0
Ridgefield	9	8	5
Sherman	6	2	1
Other Towns	78	45	50
Total	834	828	801

IV. Outreach Highlights: Dream Homes Staff attended the following meetings and trainings:

- In late May, Heather Ely attended the Danbury Housing Partnership meeting. The meeting had a Guest Speaker from The Connections who kicked off Part 1 of a study on **Seeking Solutions for Chronically Homeless Population.**
- Both Housing Advocates, Sharice Coleman and Heather Ely, met with three members of the Board of Directors of the **Holland Family Foundation.** This foundation has created privately funded Transitional Housing for single mothers. The meeting resulted in a single mother of a four month old child **leaving a Danbury shelter and signing a one year lease on a studio apartment.**
- Both, Housing Advocate's attended the Steering Committee meeting for **Dorothy Day.** The discussion focused on the new HMIS expectations from the state.
- Housing Advocate, Heather Ely, attended the **Coordinated Access Academy** held in Middletown, CT. The academy was provided to train CoC's on how Coordinated Access would work and to how to begin the implementation.
- Both Housing Advocates went to **Morning Glory** to do outreach. Housing Advocates met potential clients that would possibly be eligible for our program. Advocates were able to get the word out about funding that is available. Morning Glory was a great opportunity for Sharice to introduce herself and get acquainted with the Morning Glory program as well as meet representatives from other organizations that she will be working closely with
- ARC's Housing Advocates attended **monthly CoC meeting.** The center focus was on the quality of HMIS data and the new vision of the Statewide Coordinated Access.
- Both Advocate's participated in **CT-Rapid Rehousing Regional Meeting** in New Haven. Each region that was represented reported on their reports of who they've housed and who are soon to be house. Each region brought up concerns and conflicts they were having with specific client's and as a group we collective put together solutions. The Eviction Prevention Program was discussed and decided that the criteria for the program should be more strict. Dept. of Housing stated that they will continue to review the criteria and update the regions on the changes. Department of Housing also discussed new funding that should be available starting July 1, 2013 and will keep regions updated of or if any changes occur.

V. Program Highlights—Story of 1 family we worked with this month (names changed)

Eileen and her boyfriend, George, were referred to ARC by the Women's Center of Danbury. They came to ARC seeking assistance in finding an affordable rental property and for help with a Security Deposit. The couple was currently living apart. Both had recently lost their jobs, and for economic reasons, had sought shelter with family. For Eileen, the situation with her family quickly deteriorated and she was forced to leave. Eileen had been pursuing attending college part time, but with the loss of her job and her housing she no longer felt that school was an option. With little income her only choice was a local shelter or her car. Eileen had been a victim of abuse and did not feel safe in a shelter. She chose to stay in her car and, when her unemployment checks came in, she

would stay in a hotel. George was in an abusive relationship in his household and needed to get out as soon as possible.

The couple came to ARC with little hope of finding something and both were feeling extremely discouraged. ARC Housing Advocate and Case Manager spent time with the couple identifying local resources that would potentially be of help to them. A budget was developed and it was determined that, based on their current income, they could not afford much rent. The couple was counseled on their various options which included finding a room to rent in a home, finding another person to share expenses with, or finding a situation where they could barter for some of the rent. Over the course of the next two weeks the couple stayed in contact with ARC's Housing Advocate and Case Manager to explore options and seeking guidance and assistance. During this time they came across an opportunity for an apartment that fit into the "bartering for rent" category. In exchange for 50 hours a month of landscaping and household maintenance they could live in the two bedroom apartment on the property for rent free. The couple applied for this opportunity and was selected for the position. Although Eileen and George were excited about the housing opportunity, they were nervous about the lease and the arrangements. They requested that the ARC housing advocate look over the lease with them to help them make a decision. The lease looked good and, ultimately they made a choice to take the apartment.

They are now living in a beautiful one bedroom apartment on a private property. George is looking for employment that will allow him to meet his commitment to the landlord as well as bring home an income. Eileen has made the choice to return to Western Connecticut College and work on her bachelor degree.

ARC Housing Advocate and Case Manager went to visit the couple at their new home and provided them with a welcome basket valued at \$150.