



For immediate release: Monday, November 20, 2017

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MEDIA RELEASE: Portland, Multnomah County announce the opening of new seasonal shelter for homeless men inside downtown's Mead Building

WHAT: Announcement of new winter shelter site

WHEN: Monday, November 20

WHERE: 5th Avenue Shelter, Mead Building basement, 421 SW 5th Ave.

NOTES: *Though there won't be a media event to mark the shelter's opening, media can contact the representatives listed above to coordinate on-camera interviews and/or opportunities to record the space.*

PORTLAND -- Starting Monday, November 20, Multnomah County's Mead Building will begin hosting a seasonal shelter for dozens of men who need a safer, warmer place off the streets.

The 5th Avenue Shelter, operated by Transition Projects at 421 SW 5th Ave., will provide nighttime accommodations for up to 75 men, with special priority for veterans, people 55 and older, and those with disabilities. The shelter, operating in the Mead Building's basement, will open daily at 7 p.m. and close at 6:30 a.m. It will run through the winter, and close in April.

Transition Projects, which has a long history of providing year-round and seasonal shelter in Multnomah County, will manage the shelter. The County's Department of Community Justice will continue to use part of the Mead site for its Breakfast Club program after the shelter closes each morning.

Men need to obtain a reservation to stay at the shelter. Once enrolled, they'll have a mat of their own for as many days as they need. Participants can also store their belongings at the shelter. That means no one will need to line up outside at night to win a space, or lug around their personal items, as they go about their lives and access services, during the day.

Reservations can be obtained at Transition Projects' Day Center at the Bud Clark Commons, 650 NW Irving, Portland, or by calling 503-280-4700. To learn more about the shelter, visit www.tprojects.org/shelters/.

"Having shelter means a sense of emotional safety, a way of having a safe and dry platform to move forward with my personal program," said Michael B., one of the men who will stay at 5th Avenue when it opens. "This is a 'need' for my life, my program."

Multnomah County and Portland are providing dozens of other seasonal beds this winter. The Salvation Army Female Emergency Shelter (SAFES), at 30 SW 2nd Ave., Portland, will soon offer space for 35 additional women through March. Officials are also working to provide seasonal space for dozens of adults and children in families.

In addition, the Columbia Shelter inside the old Shleifer Furniture building, 509 S.E. Grand, will remain open until spring instead of closing this fall to make way for new construction as planned. Together, Beam Development and Urban Development + Partners are donating use of the space.

Columbia offers beds for 100 people, including men, women and some couples. To prepare the space for winter, officials have added heaters and heated mobile restrooms and showers.

These seasonal spaces are in addition to the hundreds of no-turn-away beds Portland and Multnomah County stand ready to open during a severe weather emergency.

"Right now, on any given day, we have more shelter options in our community than ever before," said Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury. "But we know we have to do even more when winter comes. Having these winter spaces ready, before severe weather hits, helps us keep our promise of never having to refuse someone in need when it does."

As part of the city and county's shared response plan, officials and partners continue to ask that neighbors help the community get ready to help vulnerable people before life-threatening conditions hit. Anyone who wants to donate winter gear or volunteer to staff a warming center should go to 211info.org to learn how and where they can go.

The more people who are trained early, and the more gear that's in the right place now, the more time service providers and first responders will have to save lives in a crisis.

The 5th Avenue Shelter will operate just like previous seasonal shelters downtown. In past years, developers including Tom Cody and the Menashe family worked with Multnomah County and Portland to offer up parts of their own properties as they sat vacant waiting for redevelopment.

Those partnerships make a difference, and they're part of a much larger response to homelessness. The community's severe-weather and seasonal beds also come alongside the 650 year-round beds partners have added since 2015. That investment has doubled the number of publicly funded year-round beds in the community.

Because of those investments, in a first for Multnomah County and Portland, this year's Point in Time Count found more people sleeping in shelter than outside or in their vehicles.

"It's our commitment to provide alternatives to sleeping on our streets, in our parks and under our bridges," Mayor Ted Wheeler said. "The 5th Avenue Shelter will provide a warm, dry place this winter for those who would otherwise be outside."

Overall, more than 8,532 people accessed at least one night of emergency shelter in the 2016-17 fiscal year, more than double the number who accessed shelter just three years before. Thousands more people a year also have moved into permanent homes or been able to avoid becoming homeless in that same span thanks to expanded services.