



NEWS ADVISORY

Sept. 28, 2021

For immediate release

City, Poverello resolve public health emergency on Cedar Street

Staff members from the City of Missoula and the Poverello Center worked hard over the past few days to help people camping on Cedar Street around the Poverello Center find alternative shelter or housing. The Missoula City-County Health Department asked City and Poverello Center leadership last Friday to address the unsanitary and unsafe conditions in the unsanctioned encampment, which “pose a risk to public health and the environment.”

Staff from the City’s Crisis Intervention Team, Police Department, Street Maintenance Division, Code Compliance and Wastewater Division worked in the area with Poverello Homeless Outreach Team members and other staff members. Staff spent Monday in conversations with people in the encampment, helping them locate alternative shelter or housing.

“The Poverello Center is grateful for the ongoing collaboration with the City of Missoula in responding to the public health emergency created by urban camping on Cedar Street,” said Poverello Center executive director Jill Bonny. “We must continue to work on both short- and long-term solutions to solve the housing challenges that our community faces. The Poverello Center Homeless Outreach Team works closely with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to meet folks where they are to help make this lasting change.”

The Homeless Outreach Team connected several people to the Missoula Coordinated Entry System, referred three pregnant women to the YWCA, began work to gain admission for one person to the Temporary Safe Outdoor Space, helped several people with resources to reach home in other cities and connected three people with the Missoula Housing Authority, where they obtained housing vouchers. The Poverello Center furnished some campers with gift cards and jump-started cars to help people return to their hometowns or reunite with family.

“We continue to strike the balance that’s necessary to keep all residents of Missoula feeling safe,” said Mayor John Engen. “We can’t cede our public spaces to illegal camping, but we also

need to continue to recognize that homelessness doesn't go away because we just moved people along. The complicated work of creating sanctioned, safe camping spaces and ultimately providing safe sustainable shelter for our residents in need continues. Health, public safety and public welfare are values that the community expects me to uphold."

The City of Missoula and Missoula County continue to work on solutions for unsheltered people in the community and hope to offer a continuum of options by late fall or early winter. They will include Emergency Winter Shelter during cold weather, an Authorized Camping Site off Clark Fork Drive and a new location for the Temporary Safe Outdoor Space.

Special thanks go to the professionals of the Homeless Outreach Team, the Missoula Police Department and the City's Crisis Intervention Team staff and their training.

"People were cooperative, and this was an excellent example of so many people collaborating to solve a problem," said Lieutenant J.C. Denton of the Missoula Police Department.

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