Covenant House Greater Washington’s Needs Increase as Homeless Youth “Shelter In-Place” During COVID-19 Pandemic

Washington, DC - In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Covenant House Greater Washington (CHGW) is taking steps to help prevent the spread of the virus at its programs and within the community, while keeping its safe housing facilities open for young people experiencing homelessness, disconnection and exploitation.

“Our work doesn’t stop,” said Angela Jones Hackley, CHGW’s Executive Director. “In serving Greater Washington’s most vulnerable young people, we don’t shut down for anything, not even a pandemic. Most of our young people don’t have a home to “shelter in place.” Many young people have lost their first jobs. We are doing our best to be a source of strength and support for them.”

To limit community contact, CHGW temporarily closed our Community Service Center. All of our young people are safely housed in one of our four housing facilities. CHGW has enacted a no-visitor policy, which makes relied-upon donations like food, linen, cleaning supplies and toiletries especially difficult to receive. Our tremendous front-line staff need PPE, hand sanitizer and Uber cards that help safeguard our team and young people during travel to and from work. To meet those needs, CHGW is respectfully asking supporters to consider a monetary donation or to purchase from our Shelter-In Place Wish List in italics above. To make a cash donation, go to www.covenanthousedc.org. You may send a check or Wish List items to 2001 Mississippi Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20020.

As resources around the Greater Washington Region become strained, CHGW anticipates an increase in the number of youth who come to the shelter for help, Angela said. The FBI recently released warnings about the increased risk of domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual exploitation during lockdowns, school and business closures. These are among the very reasons that bring young people to Covenant House Greater Washington in the first place, Angela said.

“So many people and businesses in our community are themselves facing layoffs and shortages, and yet are still asking us how they can help,” Angela said. “Now more than ever, we are relying on the generosity of our supporters, especially at this uncertain time. Their support drives our ability to serve young people experiencing homelessness, disconnection and exploitation.”
Many CHGW youth, who have recently moved into their first apartments and landed their first entry-level jobs, are now out of work, have lost all their income, and are running out of food or supplies. Most of them do not have personal transportation. CHGW teams are doing everything they can to drop off necessary items.

In the meantime, CHGW is taking extra precautions to keep youth and staff healthy. All non-essential staff are teleworking from home, incoming youth are being screened for exposure at intake, volunteers and visitors are being asked to stay home, and daily disinfecting has been significantly increased. Youth are staying in place in their rooms and inside the facilities.

“Many of our young are feeling a sense of uncertainty that is extra scary for a young person who has had little control, support or routine in their early lives,” Angela added. “As always, we are here to wrap them with the unconditional love and support. CHGW is here to be the village that many of our youth need at this time.”

Covenant House Greater Washington is one of the largest nonprofits serving the most vulnerable young people ages 18-24, offering 90 beds each night, nutritious meals, case management, education and workforce training, as well as mental health counseling. Since 1995, CHGW has served over 50,000 young people experiencing homelessness in Greater Washington.

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