



SAN DIEGO
HOUSING
COMMISSION

News Release

December 17, 2012

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IT'S "HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS" FOR 67 FORMER HOMELESS VETERANS, AS COUNCIL PRESIDENT RECOGNIZES EFFORT BY SAN DIEGO HOUSING COMMISSION AND PARTNERS

"100-Day" national campaign successfully expedited screening process for housing

San Diego, CA— As the holiday season approaches, 67 former homeless veterans in the City of San Diego have a place to call home as a result of a "100-Day" national campaign. The coordinated program accelerated the eligibility screening process for federally funded housing vouchers. San Diego City Council President Todd Gloria recognized the efforts of the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) and partners at today's council meeting.

"Homelessness is an issue that is a priority for myself, for this council, for this city," said Gloria. "It mercifully is starting to get a little more attention."

SDHC provided 67 vouchers from the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Veterans also received a variety of supportive services, including medical treatment and drug and alcohol counseling, if needed. The process also included connecting veterans with landlords. SDHC provided security deposits for 49 veterans at a cost of \$38,726 under the Emergency Solutions Grant program of HUD that funds shelter activities and homeless prevention and rapid re-housing programs.

Locally the partnership also included the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, San Diego Healthcare Systems – U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, the San Diego County Department of Housing & Community Development, United Way of San Diego County and Regional Continuum of Care Council of San Diego.

Among the veterans assisted with housing vouchers are:

Lavon, a 36-year-old former Marine lance corporal serving from 1995 to 1999 and National Guardsman, 1999 to 2007, who became homeless after completing his service with the Guard in Iraq. Lavon lived on the streets or at a friend's house for a night or two. He kept his belongings in four different places. He says, "If you don't know where you're going to be every day or don't have a stable place to be at it makes it more difficult to work, it makes it more difficult to take care of any other types of responsibilities." Prior to receiving the VASH voucher, Lavon found help through the Salvation Army's transitional housing program. Lavon now lives in an apartment in Mid-City and says it's good to "finally have something that is mine."

Ray, a 57-year-old former Navy boatswain's mate became homeless after his wife died. He spent a year at the San Diego Rescue Mission and as he was exiting the program he heard about the VASH program. "It was a blessing," he said. Ray is now going to truck driving school and expects to graduate soon. He says having an apartment makes it possible for him to have visits from his children and grandchildren, and that he feels "comfortable with myself" now.

Speaking during the council remarks portion of the meeting, Gloria expressed appreciation for "those who are actively finding solutions to ensure that our veterans have a home." Gloria acknowledged eight SDHC representatives attending the meeting, including Jeff Davis, Senior Vice President of SDHC Rental Assistance Department and Matt Packard, Vice President of SDHC Housing Innovations Department, and Myrna Pascual of the San Diego HUD office, by asking them to rise at the end of his comments.

"The 100-Day Campaign was our commitment to homeless men and women who have served their country, a population whose needs are far greater than many people realize," said Richard C. Gentry, President & CEO of San Diego Housing Commission. "The combination of housing and services in this program provides an important support system for these individuals."

The campaign was a HUD initiative in 13 regions.

"The San Diego region's success in housing 103 veterans in 100 days was due to community participation, tight coordination and collaboration by many housing agencies," said Pascual of the San Diego HUD office, the Team Lead for the City/County 100-Day Campaign.

Pascual recognized SDHC last week with certificates of appreciation for the achievement, led by the Rental Assistance Department. The campaign was part of a countywide effort that housed 103 formerly homeless veterans in 100 days, May 10-August 17, 2012, exceeding the goal to house 75 veterans.

In addition to the 67 veterans assisted with VASH vouchers provided by SDHC, the County of San Diego Department of Housing and Community Development provided vouchers for 36 veterans.

As a result of the 100-Day campaign, improved processes are now in place to continue the momentum of screening and finding homes for veterans.

One of the main issues in qualifying veterans was a lack of identification. The United Way of San Diego County provided the funding to create and provide identifications.

"The \$3,200 provided by the United Way is a great return on investment," said Brian Maienschein, Commissioner of the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness. "For an average of \$20 per person, vets were taken off the street about 10-14 days faster and were able to utilize the resources available to them."

In another move, VA San Diego Healthcare System will be adding five case managers to assist with the local efforts, which will reduce the number of days it takes to process homeless veterans.

Federal support for VASH has increased since May 2008. That year, HUD allocated 105 VASH rental assistance vouchers to SDHC. The total has since increased to 435. The County has received 305 VASH vouchers since 2009.

The VASH program links rental assistance for homeless veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Participants typically pay 30 percent of their adjusted monthly income on rent, with a \$50 minimum.

Case workers at the Department of Veterans Affairs ensure that clients receive necessary supportive social services. Once they are determined eligible, the client is referred to SDHC for housing assistance. To remain eligible, participants are required to engage in case management with an assigned VA case worker.

As administrator of the vouchers, SDHC verifies that veterans receiving rental assistance comply with all requirements of the VASH program.

For more information, go to www.sdhc.org.