

**CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA**



Agenda Date:	October 5, 2020
Action Required:	None
Presenter:	Hollie Lee, Chief of Workforce Development Strategies Shadeé Gilliam, Ramanda Jackson, Whitmore Merrick, and Stacey Washington – Home to Hope Peer Navigators Roy Fitch and Darrell Simpson – Downtown Job Center Coordinators
Staff Contacts:	Hollie Lee, Chief of Workforce Development Strategies
Title:	Home to Hope Update

Background:

In 2019, Mayor Nikuyah Walker proposed a program, Home to Hope, to train individuals with prior justice involvement to provide peer support services to those being released to the City. In partnership with the Office of Economic Development, Department of Human Services, and other community service agencies, a curriculum was developed to provide skills in peer recovery support, wellness and recovery planning, relationship building, group facilitation, resource connecting, and other fundamentals of peer navigation. At the conclusion of the training, eight individuals successfully graduated from the program. Four graduates were offered full-time positions with the City of Charlottesville and began putting their knowledge into practice starting October 2019. The other four were given employment opportunities by partnering organizations including: The Fountain Fund, Piedmont House, On Our Own, and the Downtown Job Center.

The Home to Hope program actively engages with individuals prior to release from Albemarle Charlottesville Regional Jail (ACRJ) and the Department of Corrections through one-on-one meetings, as well as peer recovery support groups and Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) classes. Prospective clients are encouraged to complete an intake for services at that time or once released. The program also accepts walk-ins and referrals from partner agencies. Once active, the participant completes a cooperative case plan to determine how to measure their individual success. Their assigned peer navigator, or another member of the team, then helps guide that participant through those identified steps. This peer relationship helps build participant confidence and skill level in steering through the labyrinth of wraparound services. Peers also help their clients in searching for stable employment, securing housing, obtaining reliable transportation, and a myriad of other needs that are individual to each participant. Examples of supportive services include: providing clients with bus passes for job searches; gift cards for groceries, clothing and fuel; and rental assistance in crisis situations. Home to Hope staff makes determinations for such assistance on a case-by-case basis by considering individual circumstances, need, and active participation in peer recovery support services.

Discussion:

Since its inception almost one year ago, the four Home to Hope Peer Navigators have been working with OED/Job Center staff to develop the program and all of its services. Home to Hope has had 235 total enrollments, with 159 active participants as of September 15, 2020. Current participants are 78% African-American, 20% Caucasian, and 2% Hispanic. The average participant age is 39, with the youngest participant being 21 and the oldest 64. At this time, 65% of participants are male, 34% are female, and 1% identifies as other. Forty seven percent of participants completed intake within 6 months of release, 33% over a year after release, and 13% between 6 months and 1 year post release. The other 7% did not identify a release date on their intake.

In addition to offering countless hours of individual peer recovery support and approximately 40 group peer recovery sessions, staff has provided \$53,854 in supportive services to participants. This includes 192 \$30 gift cards to Kroger, Walmart, Goodwill, and Exxon for basic necessities such as food, toiletries, medicine, household items, clothing, gas, etc. and 41 payments for housing assistance, car repair, private transportation, and other critical services. In regards to these services, \$29,264.50 has been spent on housing assistance, \$6,041.96 on transportation such as car repair and taxi/Uber for those on Home Electronic Incarceration (HEI) who cannot use public transportation, and \$1,394.92 on items related to employment such as uniforms. Additionally, Home to Hope has distributed 73 30-day bus passes to aid in employment search and job retention for those in transition from incarceration. Peer Navigators have helped 41 participants get placed into employment and 40 participants secure stable housing. Home to Hope currently has 34 participants who have been enrolled in the City's Housing RELIEF Fund in an effort to further stabilize housing for reentry/homeless individuals who have been impacted by COVID-19.

Of the 235 total enrollments since Home to Hope started in October 2019, 10 individuals have been reincarcerated (3 have been released again). This represents 4.2% of total program enrollments. According to Criminal Justice Planner, Neil Goodloe, ACRJ reported a return to custody rate within one year of release of 42.20% in FY16-FY17, 41.90% in FY17-FY18, and 38.50% in FY18-FY19.

In light of the success of the program and significant increase in caseload over the past six months due to COVID-19, the City's Housing RELIEF Fund, and the movement towards Home Electronic Incarceration, there will potentially be the need to hire a fifth Home to Hope Peer Navigator in the future. This fifth position, although never filled, was included in the original proposal to City Council and is currently budgeted for in the Home to Hope operating budget. Therefore, it would not require any additional funding from Council.

Alignment with Council Vision Areas and Strategic Plan:

This effort supports City Council's vision of being a Community of Mutual Respect.

It also contributes to the following goals and objectives in the City's Strategic Plan:

Goal 1: An Inclusive Community of Self-sufficient Residents

- Objective 1.2: Prepare residents for the workforce
- Objective 1.5: Intentionally address issues of race and equity

Goal 4: A Strong, Creative and Diversified Economy

- Objective 4.1: Develop a quality workforce

It aligns with Chapter 3 on Economic Sustainability in the Comprehensive Plan.

Community Engagement:

Like practically all of the OED's economic and workforce development efforts, Home to Hope engages numerous community agencies and organizations. Some examples include: the Albemarle Charlottesville Regional Jail, the Department of Corrections, Offender Aid and Restoration, District 9 Probation, The Haven/Thomas Jefferson Area Coalition for the Homeless, the Fountain Fund, the City of Charlottesville Department of Human Services and Social Services, and many other community organizations.

Budgetary Impact:

None

Recommendation:

None

Alternatives:

None

Attachments:

None