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Homelessness Summit 2015: The Solution is You

The Homeless Continuum of Care of Stark County held a Community Summit on September 10th hosted by the Sisters of Charity Foundation at the Kent Stark Conference Center in North Canton. More than 90 community leaders and stakeholders attended to learn about national goals to end homelessness, local efforts to meet those goals, the funding needed to support these efforts, and the future management of the Homeless Continuum of Care of Stark County.

Attendees learned that operating a Continuum of Care is a requirement in order for communities to receive the substantial federal

funding that supports their homeless programs. The Stark County Continuum was formally established in 2013. Functioning with one part-time staff member, two Foundation staff members whose time is donated, and a coalition of volunteers, the Continuum receives nearly \$2.3 million annually from the federal government for local housing and support services programs. This current staffing arrangement is not sustainable, however, and the group used the Summit as a venue to explain and weigh its options for a more suitable, long-term Continuum structure.

Jean Van Ness, Senior Program Officer at the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton and Board Chair for the local Continuum, urged attendees, "We have to confront the question, as a community, of how this work is going to continue."



And the work must continue: according to the Continuum's [first annual report](#), distributed at the event, an estimated more than 2,800 Stark County residents will experience homelessness in 2015.

The event's featured speakers were Katie Kitchin, Director of the Ohio office of the Corporation for Supportive Housing, and Kevin Finn, President and CEO of Strategies to End Homelessness, Inc., in Cincinnati.

A seasoned consultant and leader, Katie discussed homelessness in the national context, including the federal government's requirements, funding strategies, and goals for ending homelessness. She encouraged Summit guests, "Stay at the table and roll up your sleeves. This work is incredibly rewarding and a great opportunity for you to make a difference in your community."

Kevin agreed, stating, "Homelessness is very much a problem that can be solved." Strategies to End Homelessness, the nonprofit organization that Kevin leads, manages the Cincinnati/Hamilton County Continuum of Care. Kevin recounted the successes and challenges that the organization has experienced in coordinating necessary services, applying for federal funding, engaging community partners, and working toward ending homelessness.

"You can't get everybody rowing in the same direction if you don't let them in the boat," he asserted, encouraging those in attendance to work together to find the best option for the Stark County Continuum's future.

The Stark County Continuum plans to establish a nonprofit organization to manage its work. This will require getting political leaders, funders, and service providers "in the boat," so to speak, to ensure the structure's sustainability.

For more information on the Summit, including the options for the Continuum's structure presented at the event, [click here](#) to read an article by Chelsea Shar from the Alliance Review.



Sisters of Charity Foundation Board Learns About CommQuest Merger



During its August 26th meeting, the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton's Board held an educational session in which they learned about the merger of Quest Recovery and Prevention Services and Community Services of Stark County. Keith Hochadel and Dan Fuline, the respective CEOs, presented information to the Board about the thorough planning and steps that led to the merger of these large mental and behavioral health and substance abuse treatment organizations.

Together with several other community foundations, the Sisters of Charity Foundation awarded a grant to the Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Stark County in 2013 to support several areas of critical need among the major local mental and behavioral health service providers, including conversations around

succession planning for those providers who had identified that their leaders would be retiring within the next few years. This merger is a culmination of some of those conversations.

The boards of both organizations voted unanimously to merge programs and services, effective August 3rd. The newly merged organization is called CommQuest Services, Inc., and it will improve efficiency and community access to a wide continuum of behavioral health and social services for clients in Stark and Carroll counties. It will continue to serve the clients that the two organizations previously served separately and retain many of the same programs.

Keith Hochadel is overseeing CommQuest operations, with both organizations continuing to do business under their current names. Dan Fuline, who served as CEO of Community Services for 31 years, assisted with the transition as Special Assistant to the President until his retirement at the end of October.

Members of the Foundation Board asked the leaders a few questions following their presentation, and congratulated them on a successful merger process.



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