



LINK of Hampton Roads, Inc.

10413 Warwick Boulevard
Newport News, VA 23601
757-595-1953



October 2018

LINK OF HAMPTON ROADS, INC
10413 Warwick Blvd., Newport News, VA 23601

ANNUAL REPORT JULY 1, 2017 – JUNE 30, 2018

LINK's Mission Statement

Linking community resources to provide fast and affordable housing solutions to homeless individuals/families, as well as emergency services to men, women and children with unmet basic needs, housing crises or other emergency situations.

LINK of Hampton Roads (LINK) focuses on service provision to citizens that are experiencing homelessness and/or suffering from the effects of poverty. Agency customers are individuals (including the elderly,) with physical and/or mental disabilities and other illnesses ranging from post-operative recovery to terminal illnesses. Additionally, LINK provides basic, life-essential resources to the general public.

Fiscal year 2017/2018 continued to present many opportunities for LINK, our interfaith partners and other non-profits to come together to help meet the needs of Virginia Peninsula citizens. LINK provided the at-risk and homeless community with housing, shelter, food, clothing, furniture and household items. Partnering and exchanging information increased our ability to track, refer, and accomplish these goals. The Housing Crisis Hotline has and continues to be the centralized entry point for the hundreds of persons who are experiencing homelessness on the Peninsula and Southside.

LINK is overseen by a fifteen person Board of Directors. Personnel include an executive director, program director, finance manager, administrative assistant and operations manager. Support services are delivered via two and a half case managers for permanent housing, one half time case manager for medical respite, and two house managers for veterans' emergency shelter. LINK also partners with interfaith, civic and business communities; whose volunteer support remains essential to our mission!

Cash and other donations are utilized strictly for direct services to programs and adhere to program designations. LINK remains dedicated to being good stewards of all "gifts". Grant funded programs are audited annually by the granting agencies. LINK is also independently audited to A133 level to ensure checks and balances are in place and grant funds are utilized strictly for the purposes intended.

CANLINK PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROGRAMS (I AND IV)

LINK continues to operate two permanent supportive housing programs. The projects provide subsidized housing and support services to individuals and/or families via HUD funding. Eligible applicants must have a head of household with a disability that meets HUD specifications. The required match monies are donated by the United Way and community donors to support various supportive services that are essential to the success of program participants.

LINK of Hampton Roads, Inc.

10413 Warwick Boulevard
Newport News, VA 23601
757-595-1953

CANLINK programs house chronically homeless persons living with mental, physical or co-occurring disabilities. Participants are not excluded due to criminal histories, poor credit or lack of income. Clients were initially referred to CANLINK programs through LINK's PORT winter shelter and other Peninsula community agencies. Currently, all clients enter services through the Housing Crisis Hotline and all referrals are staffed at a local meeting of service providers for eligibility and prioritization. Referrals are managed by a waiting list and applicants are housed when a vacancy becomes available. This year 100 individuals were served. Fourteen persons exited the program. Nine of these individuals successfully transitioned to independent living.

CANLINK programs directly provide rental subsidies, case management and support services. Additionally, community service agencies provide an array of individualized, client centered services to address needs and supports to foster housing stabilization. During intake, the Program Director completes a psych-social assessment to evaluate existing supports, strengths, and needs. Based on these identified strengths and needs, a service plan is developed by the client and case manager to establish goals toward housing stability. This plan serves as the tool to monitor client progress and agency responsibilities. The service plan also addresses HUD's main project goals of increased income and greater self-determination. When a client meets stabilization goals the case manager and client develop an exit strategy that includes linkages to necessary support resources. If a client requires ongoing support to live independently, the housing subsidy and case management are maintained.

Case management services also involve working with the children in CANLINK. Case managers work with families to teach and monitor parenting skills. Community educational outings are regularly organized for the children. Support is provided to families in negotiating the school system when needed. Contact is maintained with teachers, counselors and administrators. Grades and attendance are monitored, and behavioral challenges (if any) are addressed as an essential function of CANLINK family services.

CANLINK IV was developed to support up to 7 chronically homeless veterans and/or ex-offenders providing the same services as the CANLINK I program.

Many CANLINK participants have zero income or manage on very limited financial resources. Therefore, LINK's ongoing support from Emergency Services is imperative. Each household is regularly supplied with clothing, furniture, essential household items and food on an as needed basis. These resources are made available via the support of the United Way of the Virginia Peninsula, local interfaith congregations, civic and business groups. These groups generously volunteer and donate to LINK. Norfolk State University, Old Dominion University and St Leo University provide annual Bachelor and Masters level interns who provide "boots on the ground" support, much needed by case management staff. Without all of this support, these services would be impossible!

During this reporting period, five households transitioned to unsubsidized housing. Fourteen program participants were gainfully employed and several other households actively participated in ongoing volunteer programs. One resident successfully completed a certified nursing assistant program and is gainfully employed for the first time at age thirty-eight. Two program participants successfully completed the drug treatment programs.

LINK of Hampton Roads, Inc.

10413 Warwick Boulevard
Newport News, VA 23601
757-595-1953

CANLINK programs facilitate a quarterly resident forum and support groups. These meetings address landlord/tenant issues and resident concerns/interests to ensure a consumer relevant service delivery system.

Unfortunately, there have been several clients diagnosed with significant health issues this year. This in part may be due to the aging populations entering services. Two CANLINK residents passed away. One long-term resident was transitioned into assisted living services. While it is always a shock for LINK to lose even one client, we, the staff, were most grateful that we were able to provide housing versus the alternative of these persons dying unsheltered.

PORT EMERGENCY WINTER SHELTER PROGRAM

PORT continues to be one of the largest and most innovative emergency shelter efforts on the Peninsula. PORT provides a continuum of comprehensive services to homeless men, women and children. PORT guests are of a diverse population, often experiencing complex challenges and special needs. Guests present with issues of mental illness, substance abuse, health concerns and various educational and financial crises. Sadly, the elderly population is becoming a more frequent guest of the PORT program due to lack of income and resources. As a result, guests are routinely assisted with applying for mainstream benefits such as Social Security Income or Social Security Disability Income, Medicaid, SNAP benefits, WIC, Temporary Aid for Needy Families, or Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare, and employment placement. This year LINK's statistical data continues to support an increasing trend of elderly, medically fragile, and young adults presenting at the shelter. Shelter staff continues to successfully house seniors in either assisted living facilities or other permanent housing, with the collaboration and input from other service providers on the peninsula.

PORT completes an intake on each client that enters the program and ensures that every person has hygiene items, at least two hot meals, bagged lunches, clothing, and diapers (if needed). If a guest is transitioning into housing, furniture and household items are provided and needed community referrals and linkages are made. PORT clients are "followed" to measure their success and/or challenges throughout the PORT season. Guests may also access haircuts, showers (provided by The Baptist Associations portable shower unit) and NA and AA meetings. On-site employment assistance is also available to include: assistance with obtaining identification, employment counseling, resume development, and job placement.

Hampton-Newport News Community Services Board staff are on-site twice weekly to offer mental health assistance to those who wish to engage. Southeastern Virginia Health System (PICH) offers on-site medical services for those in need of ongoing healthcare and prescription medications. Newport News Department of Human Services (NN-DHS) intake workers are available to conduct emergency, on-site family screening services nightly. Each new family with children is offered the opportunity of a next day appointment (except on weekends/holidays) with DHS to immediately begin addressing the needs of the family in crisis. Veterans Administration personnel visit weekly to ensure our Veterans are accessing all available resources. The Newport News Sheriff's Department provides on-site security, ensuring that the shelter is properly secured and our guests, staff and volunteers remain safe.

LINK of Hampton Roads, Inc.

10413 Warwick Boulevard
Newport News, VA 23601
757-595-1953

Many nights the shelter provides care for over 80+ persons. A total of 9,593 bed nights were provided to 516 unduplicated men, women and children at twenty interfaith church sites. Eighty six veterans were served at PORT during this reporting period. More than 8,500 volunteers provided meals and transported food and supplies to each site. Ninety two interfaith, civic groups, businesses, and universities participated in ensuring that PORT was provided with sufficient resources to ensure a smooth transfer on a weekly basis for 20 weeks.

Grateful thanks to the United Way, the City of Newport News, citizens of the community and to the site and partner churches for their assistance during the snow days last season!!!

Veterans Emergency Housing Program (Male Only)

The Veterans Emergency Housing Program provides rehabilitative services to veterans. Three house managers and Veterans Administration (VA) staff provide onsite supervision, daily transportation and program oversight. Services provided this year included short-term housing, case management and job assistance to male veterans in need of rehabilitative care that are experiencing homelessness. LINK also provides food, transportation and supportive services for each veteran accepted into the emergency shelter program. Intensive case management is the cornerstone in assisting these veterans with housing stabilization during their limited stay. Each veteran has an individual care plan and access to resources and supports for reintegration into community living. LINK and the Veterans Administration offer basic life skills development, employment training and placement. Physical fitness programs and ongoing support to ensure successful reentry into civilian life are also available. When veterans transition to the community, LINK's emergency service programs provide ongoing food, clothing, furniture, and household items to each veteran on an as needed basis. In 2017/2018 this program successfully served fifteen veterans of which all exited to community homes, permanent housing, VA supportive housing programs, or CANLINK I or IV.

Grateful thanks to two of LINK's oldest interfaith member churches who provide volunteers to ensure that veteran house gardens are well kept, arranged annual cook-outs and scheduled fishing trips are given the veterans.

Veterans Medical Respite Program (Male only)

LINK had the honor of being granted and implementing the first east coast pilot project for medical respite in the United States. The second Veterans Medical Respite pilot is located on the west coast in California! The program will complete its 6th year of support on September 30, 2018.

LINK runs the Veterans Medical Respite program in close partnership with the Veterans Administration Medical Center (VAMC), along with Family Centered Resources, a local home health agency that ensures that CNA/LPN/RNs provide 24/7 care. LINK provides food, transportation and supportive services for each veteran placed with the medical respite project. LINK also serves as the VAMC liaison, ensuring that our veterans receive medical care and other services needed. Many veterans entering the program are either pre or post-op. Veterans are provided with supports and services necessary to stabilize from surgical procedures or recover from serious medical conditions. In 2017/2018 this program successfully served twelve veterans. Eleven veterans were housed upon discharge from Veterans

LINK of Hampton Roads, Inc.

10413 Warwick Boulevard
Newport News, VA 23601
757-595-1953

Medical Respite. As with all of LINK's programs veterans are provided with ongoing food, clothing, furniture, and household items as needed, during the program and when they move into housing.

Emergency Services

The agency has seen a decrease of 26% in services provided to just over 22,000 men, women and children on a duplicated basis during 2017/2018.

Food, Furniture, House Hold Items, Clothing, Job Search, Job Placement, Housing Placement, Medication Assistance etc. The Center, located at the LINK building, provides resources for thousands of individuals and families either on a one-time or revolving basis, depending on the recipient's circumstances and vulnerability. Available resources include funds for emergency gas fill ups, medications, transportation in the form of LINK vehicles, HRT bus passes, or Greyhound tickets. On very rare occasions, financial assistance is limited to those most fragile and in need of one-time only financial assistance. These supports are made possible via collaboration with other agencies, interfaith churches and the United Way of the Virginia Peninsula.

Food

The Pantry provides perishable and non-perishable foods to individuals and families in need. Staff and volunteers have also expanded services to include regular delivery of food to shut-ins. Occasionally, persons who are unable to get to the LINK office due to medical fragility or other challenges are also provided with delivery service. LINK has identified the need and advocated for development of increased community delivery resources of donated food to indigent, non-elderly, homebound citizens.

As a member of the homeless services access network, LINK provides referrals to Newport News Dept of Human Services for SNAP (food stamp) benefits. The agency also directly distributes foods that are easy to open and eat until food stamps are awarded, or to fill the "gap" when food stamps run out. United Way's First Call for Help utilizes a database to track the number of citizens in need of food on a monthly basis. Utilization of this free service has assisted many agencies in avoiding duplication and abuse of limited food donation resources. LINK has been affected by the economic downturn and food request demands have continued to increase. The Food Bank, LINK's main source of purchasing food, has also been affected. Food quantities and choices have frequently been limited. LINK is a member of the Diaper Bank and also distributes free of charge, adult and children's diapers.

Clothing

LINK's clothing closet provides attire to adults, children and infants. Clothing is provided for various purposes such as seasonal appropriateness, professional presentation and to persons who are homeless and have no other resource to clean clothing. The PORT shelter distributes an inordinate amount of coats, jeans, sweaters, t-shirts, underwear, socks, boots, etc. PORT guests oftentimes will also access LINK's clothing closet to supplement their clothing in order to stay warm by layering, during the coldest parts of the winter.

LINK of Hampton Roads, Inc.

10413 Warwick Boulevard
Newport News, VA 23601
757-595-1953

Thanks to close ties with the interfaith communities, civic and business groups, donations of clothing and other items are often in abundance. LINK also helps to “spread the wealth” of clothing donation to other agencies that have the ability to distribute free clothing. Community agencies and the Veterans Administration are aware of LINK’s clothing resources. Social workers frequently bring whole families or individuals to LINK to “shop” for clothing needs. Local elementary schools, middle schools, OHA’s Clean Comfort Program, and Newport News Dept. of Human Services also receive clothing specifically for distribution to children. LINK also helps distribute clothing not accessed by the public to churches who send clothing to other countries, thus the wealth in the “clothing” world is spread far and wide!

Furniture and Household Distribution

LINK’s warehouse is conveniently located near the LINK building. The warehouse stores household items and furniture for distribution to community households transitioning from homelessness. Local churches and other donors provide LINK with a complete array of household necessities. At any one time, LINK has enough furniture and household items to fully equip twelve (12) homes. LINK works directly with multiple agencies to address community furniture and household needs. Participating agencies include the Veterans Administration, Departments of Human Services, the Red Cross, and various citizens referred by United Way First Call for Help, Mission United, etc. Many who lose furniture due to fires, floods, evictions, etc., also benefit from the wealth of donations stored at the LINK warehouse. Donations are picked up three to four times a week from community donors. Inventory is then documented and distributed freely.

Emergency Services

Life Skills/Job Training Programs

LINK provides on-site job training in basic office skills, inventory management, food pantry maintenance and distribution, and warehouse management. LINK case managers and many volunteers from the business and civic community, local colleges and/or universities, and a myriad of partner agencies provide resources for positive changes in “life skills and job training”. Dressing for success, effective interviewing strategies, mentorship, and assistance with resume writing are all activities offered in the job training program. Life skill enhancement includes economical shopping, healthy cooking, banking and money management, anger management, and parenting classes!

Building Bridges evolved to assist individual progression toward self-sufficiency via confidence building activities and enriching experiences for citizens experiencing the effects of poverty. All components of Building Bridges are available to anyone who wishes to lead a healthy and holistic lifestyle. Many of the training opportunities above are for development of foundation behaviors/habits such as reporting to volunteer (work) sites on time, promoting initiative and self-motivation. Group mentoring is provided in the form of weekly or monthly forums where participants discuss topics of their choice. Group members learn from each other’s experiences, creating a non-judgmental environment to address life challenges.

Share the Spirit

LINK of Hampton Roads, Inc.

10413 Warwick Boulevard
Newport News, VA 23601
757-595-1953

The Share the Spirit Program began 27 years ago and continues today to provide families experiencing the effects of poverty with gifts of food, clothing and toys during the Thanksgiving and Christmas Season. LINK's donors "adopt" a family and provide some of the things on the child (ren's) wish list. LINK, with the donors, ensures that each family has a Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner.

Volunteer Program

LINK could not survive without the thousands of volunteers who work within our programs. Volunteers are the "backbone" of this agency. Without volunteers, LINK would not be able to provide the myriad of services that are donated free of charge, particularly the PORT winter shelter!

Volunteers come in the form of interns from ODU, Norfolk State, St. Leo and Christopher Newport Universities. Additionally, local colleges such as Centura and Thomas Nelson, who also provide volunteer support. The Federal Half Way House, Probation and Parole, the Newport News Dept. of Human Services TANF and VIEW, workers are invaluable in keeping LINK offices and operations functioning smoothly. AARP volunteers also assist with the day to day running of the agency! LINK's main volunteer "heartbeat" is the interfaith congregations of the Peninsula!

The Board of Directors and the interfaith-based community are the AXIS upon which LINK revolves and survives. The generosity of all persons who represent the faith-based community and other public agencies come together in order to ensure that LINK's clients – men, women and children are provided with potentially life -saving support and assistance.

Thank you for your interest and generosity to LINK.