**October 21, 2022**

**LINK OF HAMPTON ROADS, INC**

**10413 Warwick Blvd., Newport News, VA 23601**

**ANNUAL REPORT JULY 1, 2021 – JUNE 30, 2022**

***LINK’s Mission Statement***

***Linking community resources to provide fast and affordable housing solutions to homeless individuals/families as well as other emergency services to men, women and children who do not have access to their basic needs and find themselves in a housing crisis or other emergency.***

LINK of Hampton Roads (LINK) focuses on service provision to citizens who are experiencing homelessness and suffering the effects of poverty. Agency clients are individuals (including the elderly,) with physical and/or mental disabilities and other illness ranging from post-operative recovery to terminal illnesses and substance use issues. LINK provides basic, life-essential resources, housing, shelter, transitional shelter, and permanent supportive housing to in house clients and the general public. LINK will enter its 32nd year of existence on December 8, 2022.

Fiscal year 2021/2022 continued to present many opportunities of growth, despite COVID 19 closing the country down for many months in 2020/2021. LINK’s interfaith partners and volunteers have slowly begun to return to providing support to LINK, providing volunteer time and donations of money, clothing, furniture, and household items.

ALL of LINK programs were totally revamped during this fiscal year to offer ongoing protection from Covid. These efforts helped to reduce effects to staff, clients, and volunteers, who provided assistance on a day-to-day basis at the LINK offices and at the PORT Winter Shelter for in person care and services. Staff maintained protected and distanced, Covid protocols when visiting CANLINK Permanent Supportive Housing clients and these efforts were also varied to protect veterans residing at the LINK Veterans Transitional Housing Program homes.

The City of Newport News ensured their continued partnership and provided resources to LINK as we recovered from Covid community isolation, especially for volunteers, staff and unhoused persons.

LINK is overseen by a thirteen-person Board of Directors.

Personnel include an executive director, program director, finance manager, part time financial assistant, senior case manager and a case manager, a three quarter time veteran case manager, part time administrative manager, and part time operations manager. Housing support services are delivered via a program director and two case managers for permanent supportive housing. One three quarter time case manager oversees the veterans two emergency shelter homes to include supervision of the two live in-house managers.

Cash and other donations are utilized strictly for direct services to programs. LINK remains dedicated to being good stewards of all “gifts”. Grant funded programs are audited annually by the granting agencies, i.e. the city of Newport News, city of Hampton, the Dept of Housing and Community Development, and Housing and Urban Development (HUD), all who provide financial support to LINK. 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, no issues or findings during the 2021 audit. The 2021/2022 audit is currently in process and will be released January 2023.

**CANLINK PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROGRAMS (I AND IV and Extended)**

LINK operates 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.

CANLINK programs manage sixty seven (67) units and house a total of ninety-two (92) chronically homeless adults and children to include individual and family units. (Two x unit slots were unused as of July 31st due to lack of housing inventory). All adults of households live with mental and/or physical or co-occurring disabilities. Participants are not excluded due to criminal histories, poor credit or lack of income, substance use, etc. Clients were initially referred to CANLINK programs through LINK’s PORT winter shelter and other Peninsula community agencies. Currently, all CANLINK clients enter housing through the Housing Crisis Hotline and referrals are screened at a local meeting of service providers for eligibility and prioritization and subsequent referral to vacancies in CANLINK as they present. Referrals are managed by a waiting list and applicants who are housed when a vacancy becomes available. One death occurred this year. Fifty-six (56) households were provided with food on an ongoing basis throughout the year and seventeen (17) families received assistance from Share the Spirit to include Christmas and Thanksgiving dinners, gifts for children/babies. Ongoing bus passes were provided for medical and other appointments. Regular transportation is provided to all clients in CANLINK and are accompanied, if necessary, by a case worker. Home visits are conducted on a monthly basis. Home inspections are performed every three months, support to access employment, mental health counseling, substance use interventions are ongoing/as needed and if clients are receptive. Food and furniture delivery are provided on a weekly/ongoing basis as needed .

The housing shortage remains real and due to the Covid moratorium leaving little to no options for staff to place persons into housing because of lack of housing inventory or housing that falls at or below the federal market rate. Rent rates continue to increase locally and across the country.

CANLINK programs provide rental subsidies, case management and support services. Additionally, community service agencies provide an array of individualized, client centered services to address homeless 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 each clients progress and agency responsibilities. The service plan also addresses HUD’s main project goals of increased income, increasing length of stay 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 and when possible. Ninety nine percent of clients require ongoing support to live independently, the housing subsidy and case management are maintained regardless of number of months or years of residency in the program.

Case management services also involve working with the children of the CANLINK participants. Case managers work with families to teach and monitor parenting skills. Community educational outings are regularly organized for the children. Parental support is provided 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 house moves were contracted out to local moving companies.

Ten mainstream housing vouchers were offered to CANLINK participants who qualified by age and stabilization and were housed in place. Two clients moved to adult care facilities.

CANLINK IV was developed to support up to seven (7) chronically homeless, single veterans and/or ex-offenders providing the same case management and oversite services as the CANLINK I and CANLINK Extended programs. Five clients were served in CANLINK IV throughout the year with duplicated food delivery, household items, clothing, etc. Two vacancies exist at fiscal year-end due to the lack of housing inventory.

Many CANLINK participants have either zero income or manage on very limited income. Therefore, LINK’s ongoing support from LINK’s Emergency Services Center for food, clothing, furniture, and household items is imperative for provision to both situated clients and new clients entering the program. Resources are made available via the support of local interfaith congregations, and civic and business groups. Many groups from local businesses, also generously volunteer and donate funds to LINK. Norfolk State University, Old Dominion University and Thomas Nelson Community College provide annual Bachelor or master’s level interns who provide “boots on the ground” support, which is much needed by the case management staff.

Without all the support received, services would be challenged to complete the daily chores of caring for a total of sixty-seven (67) households.

CANLINK programs will continue to facilitate quarterly resident forum and support groups once safe for staff and clients to meet again in person. The meetings address landlord/tenant issues and resident concerns/interests to ensure a consumer relevant service delivery system. BBQ’s, monthly meetings, and Holiday sharing were back for client participation and socialization on a limited basis.

**PORT EMERGENCY WINTER SHELTER PROGRAM**

PORT continues to be one of the largest and most innovative emergency shelter efforts on the Peninsula and was challenged for the 21/22 season of PORT, partially due to the remnants and new outbreaks of Covid 19 and a significant increase of homeless persons, due to the end of the rental moratorium and a gradual increase in rental costs.

The city of Newport News gathered a team of strong representatives to help LINK staff plan and implement the 2021/2022 PORT program which provided two shelter sites.

PORT provides a continuum of comprehensive services to homeless men, women and children. PORT guests are a diverse population, often experiencing complex challenges and special needs. Guests present with issues of mental and physical illness, substance abuse, health concerns and various educational and financial crises. Sadly, the elderly population is becoming more frequently represented at the PORT program, often due to lack of income and affordable rentals plus lack of 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 2021/2022 fiscal year LINK’s statistical data continues to support an increasing trend of elderly, medically fragile, and young adults presenting at the shelter. Shelter staff coordinated with Adult Protective Services, twenty-three cases of inability to care for themselves. Many of these reported guests chose to enter assisted living or nursing home facilities.

PORT completes an intake on each client that enters the program and ensures that every person has hygiene items, a minimum of two hot meals, bagged lunches, clothing, and diapers (if needed). If a guest is transitioning into housing, furniture was provided and needed community referrals and linkages were made. PORT clients are “followed” to measure their success and/or challenges throughout the PORT season. The usual supportive services for clients were limited due to the rigidity of the shelter this year. Each guest was assigned a mat and bedding upon entry, apart from seeking bathroom time or intake assessment, guests were required to remain on their mats and sleep. Dinners were served at Temple Baptist Church and the tightest controls were in place to ensure the safety of clients, volunteers, and staff. Medical personnel screened the guests nightly and ensured if they were ill, that guests went for screening to the hospital where Covid tests were carried out and guests were given a one night stay in a hotel until results were provided to PORT staff. If positive, guests remained in hotels for one week.

Under a contract with the city of Newport News, Hampton-Newport News Community Services Board staff are on-site twice weekly to offer mental health assistance to those who wish to engage. Newport News Department of Human Services (NN-DHS) intake workers are available nightly to conduct emergency, telephone family screening services. Ongoing coordination with Four Oaks Day Support Center was regular. Transportation was provided to guests through 11 p.m. nightly and early morning. Each new family with children was offered the opportunity of a next day appointment (except on weekends/holidays) with Newport News Dept of Human Services, to immediately begin addressing the needs of the family in crisis. Veterans Administration Medical Center (VAMC) were notified of incoming homeless Veterans and arrangements coordinated for the Veteran to enter the VAMC, which provides and is overseen with program support. The Newport News Sheriff’s Department and SOS Security provided support on-site security, ensuring that the shelter is properly secured, and our guests, staff and volunteers remained safe. Expedite Properties provided daily cleaning, site sanitation and laundry of guest linens.

LINK returned to one shelter site for the 2021/2022 PORT season. One hundred and forty (140) nights of shelter provided care for up to 116 persons per night. A total of 10,064 duplicated bed nights were provided to 554 unduplicated men, women, and children at the above interfaith sites. (An increase of 3,921 duplicated bed nights and 148 unduplicated persons compared to 2020/2021 season). Over 6,000 volunteers provided meals and transported food and supplies to each site.

PORT closed after 20 weeks of providing the PORT shelter to guests. Nurses assisted in maintaining health and well-being in the shelter on a nightly basis. PORT continued with an automated system for check in and intake for the season, providing a more seamless approach to registering every guest entering the shelter.

**Veterans Emergency Housing Program (Male Only)**

The Veterans Emergency Housing Program provides rehabilitative services to veterans. Two 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 provides food, transportation and supportive services for each veteran accepted into the housing 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 skill 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 21/22 this program successfully served fifteen (15) male veterans, with 2,011 duplicated bed nights, and all exited to community homes, permanent housing, VA supportive housing programs, or CANLINK I or IV. Ten thousand nine hundred and eighty. Three meals and two snacks per day were provided. Covid 19 again affected this program and all veterans entering followed household safety protocols. Protocols were implemented for veterans to remain well during their stay. Three veterans contracted Covid and were moved to hotels to recover and were delivered three meals and two snacks per day during their Covid recovery. Veterans during and upon exit are provided clothing and furniture if needed, upon exit. Thank you to Kirkwood Presbyterian members who continued to cook and donate lovely home cooked food for the veterans in both houses, special treats for the men! Historically, the stay for veterans is 90 days, but due to Covid many were and continued to be with the program for up to a year due to lack of available affordable housing inventory.

Grateful thanks again, to Gloria and Steve Griffin, two of LINK’s oldest interfaith churches members, who provide volunteer time and a team of congregation members who ensured that the veteran houses are supported.

**Emergency Services Center**

Food, Furniture, Household Items, Clothing, Job Search, Job Placement, Housing Placement, Medication Assistance, gas assistance and other unusual needs are met under the ESC.

The Center, located at the LINK building in Hilton, provides resources for thousands of duplicated individuals and families (a one-time or most prevalent, on a revolving basis), depending on the client’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. During intake clients are provided with the opportunity to access shelter or other information pertaining to collaborative services available on the Peninsula. Resources are made possible via collaboration with other agencies, interfaith churches, members of the public, civic groups, businesses and the United Way of the Virginia Peninsula.

**Food - ESC Program**

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 disabilities, medical fragility or with other challenges are also provided with delivery service. LINK has identified the need and advocated for the development of increased community delivery resources of donated foods 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 benefits. LINK 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. The Food Bank, LINK’s main source of accessing and purchasing food, continued to be affected by food shortages. Food quantities and choices have been limited to certain items to try and meet the increasing demands of clients seeking food assistance. Duplicated and unduplicated persons were provided with food either just one time, but mostly, throughout the year, either through onsite shopping at LINK or who received home deliveries.

During Covid, all clients who came to LINK for emergency services were provided with food, clothing or other items, with or without referral, and continue to be served on the same basis. Deliveries of food items increased, especially to shut ins and those persons medically fragile.

**Clothing - ESC Program**

LINK’s clothing closet provides attire to adults, children and infants. Clothing is provided for various purposes such as seasonal appropriateness, professional and casual presentation. To persons who are homeless and have no other resource to clean clothing, to many living in adult care facilities and members of the public who are unable to afford seasonal clothing.

The clothing closet also supplies clothing to the PORT shelter which distributes an inordinate number of coats, jeans, sweaters, t-shirts, underwear, socks, boots, etc., on a nightly basis. PORT guests oftentimes will also access LINK’s clothing closet during the daytime, to supplement their clothing in order to stay warm by layering, during the coldest parts of the winter.

Thanks to close ties with the Peninsula interfaith communities and civic and business groups, donations of clothing and other items are mostly in abundance. LINK also helps to “spread the wealth” of clothing donations to other agencies that can 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, and Newport News Dept. of Human Services also receive clothing specifically for distribution to children. LINK also assists distribution of 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 -ESC Program**

LINK’s storage is conveniently located near the LINK building. The storage contains 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. Some of those agencies are 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, especially hotels and interfaith members who are aware of the need. Inventory is then documented and distributed freely.

**Emergency Services/Share the Spirit -ESC Program**

The Share the Spirit Program began 26 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 LINK known 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 with all the fixings!

**Volunteer Program**

LINK could not survive without the thousands of volunteers who work within our programs. Volunteers are the “backbone” of this agency, and without them 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 and Christopher Newport Universities. Additionally, local colleges such as Centura and Thomas Nelson, who also provide volunteer support. The Federal Halfway House, Probation and Parole, AARP, 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, local businesses, civic groups, and members of the public, plus United Way of the Virginia Peninsula, are the AXIS upon which LINK revolves and survives to provide very basic and much needed services. The generosity of all persons who represent the interfaith-based community and other public agencies come together to ensure that LINK’s clients – men, women and children are provided with the support and assistance necessary for stabilization of their life situations.

We celebrate another year, our 32nd year, of service to the Hampton Roads community!

Thank you for your support.