**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 don’t 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 the effects of poverty. Agency customers 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. Additionally, LINK provides basic, life-essential resources to in house clients and the general public. LINK will enter its 32 Nd year of existence on December 8, 2022.

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

ALL of LINK programs were totally revamped to offer continued protection to staff and the volunteers who continue to support the day-to-day operations of LINK and PORT Winter Shelter.

The City of Newport News continued in their partnership with the city of Newport News who provided resources to LINK as we recovered from Covid community isolation.

LINK is overseen by a thirteen-person Board of Directors. Personnel include an executive director, program director, finance manager, financial assistant, senior case manager and a case manager, a veteran case manager, administrative manager, and operations manager. Support services are delivered via a program director and two case managers for permanent housing. One three quarter time case manager oversees veterans two emergency shelter houses, plus their two live in-house managers. (Veterans Medical Respite was closed in August 2020 due to community staffing challenges).

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 who support 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 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.

CANLINK programs house a total of ninety-five (95) chronically homeless adults and children to include individual and family units. All adults of households living 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. Referrals are managed by a waiting list and applicants are housed when a vacancy becomes available. One death occurred this year. 56 households were provided with food on an ongoing basis throughout the year and 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 by a case worker, usually. Home visits monthly, home inspections every three months, support to access employment, mental health counseling, substance use interventions are ongoing/as needed. 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 feel 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 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 of 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. House moves were contracted out to local moving companies.

Some mainstream vouchers were offered to CANLINK participants who qualified by age and stabilization, two moved to adult care facilities.

CANLINK IV was developed to support up to eight (8) chronically homeless veterans and/or ex-offenders providing the same case management and oversite services as the CANLINK I and CANLINK Extended programs. Four people were served in CANLINK IV throughout the year with duplicated food delivery, household items, clothing, etc. Two vacancies exist at fiscal yearend due to the lack of inventory due to the eviction moratorium.

Many CANLINK participants have either zero income or manage on very limited income. Therefore, LINK’s ongoing support from Emergency Services for food, clothing, furniture and household items is imperative for provision to both situated clients and new clients entering into the program. These resources are made available via the support of the United Way of the Virginia Peninsula, local interfaith congregations and civic and business groups. These groups generously volunteer and donate 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, much needed by case management staff.

Without all the support received, services would be challenged to complete the daily chores of caring for a total of sixty-eight (68) 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 greatly challenged for the 21/22 season of PORT, again 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 program.

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 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 coordinated with Adult Protective Services, twenty-three cases of inability to care for themselves. Many of these folks chose to enter into 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, they went for screening to the hospital where Covid tests were carried out and they were given a night in a hotel until results were provided to staff.

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. Each new family with children is 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 were notified of incoming homeless Veterans and arrangements coordinated for the Veteran to enter into VAMC overseen program support. The Newport News Sheriff’s Department and SOS Security provided on-site security, ensuring that the shelter is properly secured and our guests, staff and volunteers remain 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 again in maintaining health and well-being in the shelter. PORT continued with the automated system for check in and intake this season, providing a more seamless approach to registering everyone 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 (10,980) meals were provided. Covid 19 again affected this program and all veterans entering followed household safety protocols. Protocols were put in place for veterans to remain well during their stay. Three veterans contracted Covid. As with all of LINK’s veteran programs, veterans are provided three full meals, snacks, clothing as needed and furniture if needed, upon exit. Thank you to Kirkwood Presbyterian members who continued to cook and donate food for the veterans in both houses. The usual stay for veterans is 90 days. Due to Covid many were and continue to be with us for up to a year due to lack of available affordable housing.

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

**Emergency Services**

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 most often 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. 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 disabilities, 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 DHS for SNAP 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. The Food Bank, LINK’s main source of purchasing food, continued to be affected by shortages. Food quantities and choices have been limited to certain items. Additionally, unduplicated persons were provided with food throughout the year, either through onsite shopping at LINK or received home deliveries.

During Covid, all clients who came to LINK for emergency services were provided 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 total 17,164 duplicated persons/2,828 unduplicated persons.

**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 number 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.

Thanks to close ties with the interfaith communities and civic and business groups, donations of clothing and other items are often in abundance. LINK also helps to “spread the wealth” of clothing donations 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, 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; 3,446 unduplicated persons/4,651 duplicated persons, received direct clothing from LINK throughout the year, this does NOT include clothing distributed at the PORT winter shelter.

**Furniture and Household Distribution**

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. Inventory is then documented and distributed freely; 504 unduplicated persons received furniture from LINK which was either picked up from the LINK warehouse or was delivered by LINK staff. A total of 745 duplicated persons were served with household/furniture items.

**Emergency Services/Share the Spirit**

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!

Agency totals 12,560 unduplicated and 45,710 duplicated persons were provided a variety of agency support and services.

**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 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 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 of service to the Hampton Roads community!

Thank you for your support.