

DATE: November 4, 2020

TO: WHMI NEWS

FROM: The Severe Weather Network Livingston County Homeless Shelter

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEVERE WEATHER NETWORK LIVINGSTON COUNTY CONFIRMS SAFE ALTERNATIVE SHELTERING OPTION FOR HOMELESS MEN AND WOMEN THIS WINTER SEASON. ORGANIZATION IS REQUESTING COMMUNITY'S FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Severe Weather Network Livingston County, a nonprofit organization offering seasonal emergency sheltering services to homeless adult men and women, will open on December 1, 2020 with operational changes in place due to the Covid19 pandemic.

Recommendations made to the Severe Weather Network Board of Directors by Diane McCormick, Director of the Livingston County Health Department and Therese Cremonte, Livingston County Emergency Manager, to suspend plans for a congregate shelter due to concerns of a potential Covid19 outbreak, as well as the fact Livingston County does not have established IQS (individual quarantine sites) to shelter Covid19 infected individuals, required the Severe Weather Network Board of Directors to seek alternative plans for sheltering for the upcoming winter season.

The SWN has been providing congregate sheltering services during the winter months since 2015. For the past two seasons the organization has provided 2,275 shelter nights to 67 adult men and women. The number of homeless adults seeking shelter this coming season is expected to be significantly higher given the pandemic, the current unemployment rate and the increase in rental evictions. For these reasons, the Severe Weather Network pivoted and designed a model of sheltering that will better ensure the safety of guests, volunteers and staff. The organization has partnered with a local hotel to provide emergency sheltering accommodations to homeless adult men and women in Livingston County from December 1, 2020 through April 30, 2021. The Severe Weather Network will operate a 24 hour emergency shelter hotline effective December 1 for guests to call in advance to register for assistance. The SWN will rely on volunteers to prepare and deliver dinners to the guests 3-4 times a week. Breakfast will be provided daily by the hotel. Local laundromat vouchers will be supplied to each guest. Transportation will be available by appointment through LETS for travel to and from human service agency appointments, medical appointments, employment interviews, laundromat services, and local job sites. The Severe Weather Network Program Coordinator, Pamela Mitchell will continue to play a key role in connecting guests with local human services

agencies and help to ensure guests are taking initiatives to improve their situation and following through on all steps necessary towards securing sustainable housing.

The SWN organization is operated through grant funding and community donations. Funds donated to the program are utilized for the following: operational and administrative costs, guest's rental security deposits, guest's renters insurance, guest's automotive repairs, and guest's transportation costs for travel to and from service agency appointments, work, and medical appointments.

This year's significant programming change will most definitely impact the budget. The SWN Board is seeking the community's help to support this new sheltering option by purchasing a shelter night(s) during the season. The cost for one hotel night is \$50.00. The organization hopes to raise \$75,000 to accommodate up to 10 guests per night over the 22 week season offering 1,500 nights of shelter. Donations may be made online at www.livingstonswn.org or by check. Checks may be mailed to SWN Livingston County, 214 E. Brooks Street, Suite 1, Howell, MI 48843.

Individuals or organizations interested in volunteering to prepare and deliver meals may register on the organization's website after November 15. For more information on the Severe Weather Network visit www.livingstonswn.org or contact Program Coordinator, Pamela Mitchell at livingstonswn@gmail.com.