SEVERE WEATHER NETWORK LIVINGSTON COUNTY HOMELESS SHELTER PROGRAM

MAY 27, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SEVERE WEATHER NETWORK LIVINGSTON COUNTY HOMELESS SHELTER PROVIDES 1227 NIGHTS OF EMERGENCY SHELTER TO 57 HOMELESS ADULTS.  ORGANIZATION SEEKING VOLUNTEER AND FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS FOR THE 2023 WINTER SEASON

The Severe Weather Network Livingston County (SWN), a 501 © (3) nonprofit organization providing emergency winter sheltering services to Livingston County homeless adult men and women, wrapped up its 6th winter shelter season on April 30, 2022.  This season, the shelter opened its doors on November 1, 2021, one month earlier than in previous years, operating for six months.  A total of 1,227 nights of emergency shelter were provided to 57 adults ranging in age from 18 to 72.   Prior to 2017, Livingston County had no congregate homeless shelter.  Homeless adult men and women seeking emergency shelter had access to a limited amount of government funded motel vouchers from local service agencies, mainly The Salvation Army and the Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency.  Due to funding limitations and restrictions on the number of hotel nights per voucher, homeless individuals had no options during the coldest months of the year but to shelter in automobiles, on the streets or in tents.  Initially a grassroots effort, the Severe Weather Network was formed by caring, compassionate and empathetic individuals within the community who saw there was a great need for sheltering services.

Diane Duncan, SWN Board Co-chairperson, is grateful for the dedication and commitment of the 206 community volunteers, local businesses and restaurants for their contribution of time, treasure and talent during the 2021-2022 season.  Throughout this season, guests were connected to resources for housing, employment, mental health, and medical health.  Financial contributions were utilized for facility rental space, meals, transportation, staff, overnight security, and Covid safety measures.  One of the key goals of the SWN is to aid guests in finding permanent solutions to end their homelessness. To this end, financial assistance is also used for guest assistance including down payments for rental leases, rental insurance, fuel, automotive repairs, and automotive insurance.

Duncan shared, “While we are pleased to have been able to accommodate the needs of homeless individuals this season, the operation faced many challenges.  For the past two seasons, our main focus has been to ensure our guests, volunteers, and staff were protected from Covid.  The SWN Board and staff are incredibly proud that the enforcement of all Covid safety protocols resulted in zero transmission of Covid allowing the Severe Weather Center to remain fully operational.  However, the pandemic deterred more than half of our 450 volunteer team members from engaging with us. Needless to say, this created unique challenges for this year’s operations.

The SWN Board is currently in the planning stages for the 2022/2023 season.  Due to the significant drop in volunteers and overall funding contributions, the SWN Board, over the summer months, will be petitioning churches, businesses and community members for

volunteers and funding commitments for the upcoming season.   It is our hope that the community will see the valuable resource our organization provides to Livingston County and will do all possible to ensure homeless adults will continue to have a warm, safe, refuge during the winter months.  The SWN Board will evaluate volunteer and financial commitments in late August to determine next year’s operation.”