



Downtown Emergency Service Center

515 Third Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104-2304
Phone: 206-464-1570 Fax: 206-624-4196 Web: www.desc.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT

Nicole Macri
office 206-515-1514
cell 206-313-3751
email nmacri@desc.org

DESC celebrates opening of new housing for homeless alcoholics *Project is first in WA to use innovative treatment model*

Event Details

- Date:-** Thursday, December 15, 2005
- Location:** 1811 Eastlake Ave. 98109 (between Yale and the Denny overpass to I-5).
Parking is limited. The building is adjacent to a pay lot, and there is some parking on Yale, and on side street just north of Denny.
- Schedule:** Media welcome at facility tours 2:30-3:30 p.m. and recognition program 3:30-4:15 p.m.
- Photo Opps:** Speakers include Exec. Sims, HUD Regional Director, John Meyers, Seattle Human Services Dept. Director Patricia McInturff, DESC Executive Director Bill Hobson.

SEATTLE – The Executive Director of the Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC), Bill Hobson, will join King County Executive Ron Sims, HUD Regional Director, John W. Meyers, and local government and community leaders at the opening of 1811 Eastlake, a supportive housing unit for homeless chronic alcoholics. Remarks and recognitions will take place on Thursday, December 15, 2005 at 3:30 p.m. at 1811 Eastlake Ave, Seattle.

1811 Eastlake is the first housing unit of its kind in Washington to use this innovative housing model for addressing the needs of chronic homeless alcoholics. Residents will benefit from 24 hour-7 day a week management support including mental health and chemical dependency treatment, nursing support, meals and counseling assistance. The project aims to improve the lives of its residents through reduced alcohol consumption, better health care, and increased stability. It will also reduce residents' use of the community's crisis response system, reduce public nuisances and encourage residents to undertake and follow through with alcohol treatment.

"With winter upon us, I'm pleased that DESC is providing new units of supportive housing for some of the King County's most difficult-to-house individuals," said HUD Regional Director John W. Meyers. "This project supports national and local goals of ending chronic homelessness by providing housing and treatment for homeless persons who are often written off as beyond help. DESC is reaching these forgotten folks."

"Our best hope for helping chronic alcoholics is to move them off the streets and into safe and stable housing, with immediate access to treatment services," said King County Executive Ron Sims. "1811 Eastlake will house 75 chronically homeless people, reducing a costly cycle through emergency and criminal justice services and improving both public health and public safety in the downtown area."

Located on the northeast edge of downtown, 1811 Eastlake flowed out of a 1997 community-wide planning process, which developed the “Housing Plan for Persons who are Chronically Publicly Inebriated (CPI)”. It is estimated that there 1,000-1,400 CPIs in downtown Seattle on any given day. These people are typically over 45 years of age, chronically homeless, have at least 15 years of chronic alcohol addiction, and multiple, failed attempts at publicly-funded conventional alcohol treatment.

This relatively small segment of the population utilizes a hugely disproportionate amount of community resources and taxpayer dollars in their utilization of emergency and hospital services, emergency transportation, detoxification services, court, jail and legal services. For example, the top 20 service utilizers within the local CPI population were estimated to cost King County taxpayers approximately \$54,542 per person for drug and alcohol services in 2000, a figure that does not include police services, sobering van services, ambulance services, and administrative costs associated with each of these (Vanzo, 2001). In comparison, 1811 Eastlake will provide housing and services to each resident at just over \$13,000 annually.

The project will improve overall public safety and reduce emergency health and criminal justice expenditures by stabilizing the residents in a less costly setting. Two similar projects in Minneapolis, Anishinabe Wakiagun and The Glenwood, have shown significant reductions in emergency room use (26%), jail (41%) and detox facilities (32%).

Work on this project was delayed from 2002 to 2004 to battle legal challenges from a small group of business owners who did not want the project in their neighborhood. The litigation escalated through the state system until March 2004, when the Washington State Supreme Court denied opponents petition for review of a State Court of Appeals decision, exhausting their legal options in the state court system.

The social policy implications of the project are significant and far-reaching. Dissemination of the outcomes achieved at 1811 Eastlake might help sway public opinion and public policy. It is for these reasons that DESC is collaborating with Drs. G. Alan Marlatt and Mary Larimer, nationally recognized experts in substance abuse research, and their team at the Addictive Behaviors Research Center of the **University of Washington** to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. A \$400,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is funding an evaluation on the first three years of operation and will have a far-reaching impact on the conventional thinking regarding housing this population. This study is examining the relationship between residing in permanent supportive housing in two salient domains: variables related to quality of life and suppression of crisis services. Previous research from the National Institute of Alcohol and Drug Abuse indicates that less than 5 percent of people with this profile ever become abstinent for the remainder of their lives.

The \$11.2 million project was paid for using investments through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program administered through the State Housing Finance Commission and other sources. Funders include the City of Seattle, the State Housing Division of CTED (Housing Trust Fund), King County, Federal Home Loan Bank and the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development.

DESC is a nationally-recognized leader in serving homeless men and women living with behavioral health disabilities, severe mental disorders and chronic addictive illnesses. Washington State has licensed the organization as a mental health and chemical dependency treatment provider. DESC is highly experienced in working with this population through its operation of over 500 units, which provides housing and services to similar populations. For more information, visit www.desc.org.

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