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REACHING HOME UPDATE SET FOR JAN. 23 A Year in Review and Looking Ahead

The City of Missoula will present a public update on Reaching Home: Missoula's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness on Tuesday, Jan. 23, 4-6 p.m. in City Council Chambers at 140 W. Pine St.

The plan is at an exciting point, nearing the end of its second phase, Building a Coordinated System to End Homelessness. During the past year, Reaching Home coordinator Theresa Williams has led an effort to redesign Missoula's "single point of entry," which brings all citizens experiencing homelessness and needing help under one social services umbrella, now referred to as Missoula's Coordinated Entry System. It streamlines and reduces duplication of housing and service provider efforts, provides data to help with strategic planning and decision-making and helps prioritize limited housing resources for people who are experiencing homelessness and are identified as the most vulnerable. That saves money for the community, and it saves lives.

Missoula's 10-Year Plan launched in 2012 after more than a year and a half of work by a working group appointed by Mayor John Engen and Missoula County Commissioner Jean Curtiss. Its work was based on guidance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, which has advised communities across the nation that have built 10-year plans to end homelessness. The plans help communities lay the foundation of what it means to end homelessness, not merely manage it.

Tuesday's presentation will open with Mayor Engen and Commissioner Curtiss. Coordinator Theresa Williams will present an overview of the strategies being implemented. Eran Pehan, director of the City's Office of Housing and Community Development, where Reaching Home is housed, will moderate a panel made up of representatives of collaborating agencies. The panelists will be:

Theresa Williams, Reaching Home Coordinator, City of Missoula
Julie McFarland, Technical Assistance Provider
Cindy Weese, Executive Director, YWCA
Laurie Pope, Project Coordinator, Open Aid Alliance
Amy Chesebro, Jail Diversion Program Manager, Western Montana Mental Health Center
Merry Hutton, Regional Coordinator for Community Benefit and Care Transitions, Providence St.
Patrick Hospital
Mary Jane Nealon, Director of Innovation, Partnership Health Center
Don Evans, Executive Director, Union Gospel Mission
Jill Bonny, Program Manager, Housing Montana Heroes, Poverello Center
Will Gardner, Outreach Worker, Homeless Outreach Team, Poverello Center
Darren Ashby, Board Member, Missoula Interfaith Collaborative
Shelagh More, Missoula Police Department and Downtown Business Improvement District of
Missoula

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