

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRIDE PLACE AT VHBG

Partnership Expected to Reduce Homelessness of LGBTQ+ Young Adults

Richmond, VA [June 1, 2020] – Virginia Home for Boys and Girls (VHBG) and Side by Side have launched a partnership called Pride Place at VHBG to serve LGBTQ+ young people experiencing homelessness.

“LGBTQ+ young people are 120% more likely to experience homelessness compared to their peers. Although this was all the case before COVID-19, the pandemic is exacerbating an already growing problem and we are bracing for an increase in need from our community,” said Ted Lewis, Side by Side executive director.

At no cost to participants, the Pride Place at VHBG program will provide safe, transitional housing for 14-18 homeless LGBTQ+ young adults annually who are between the ages of 18- 25. Side by Side will provide the case management, intake and overall support for LGBTQ+ young adults while VHBG will provide the physical space, emergency response and opportunities for learning life skills. Clients will be paired with Peer Navigators through a partnership with the Nationz Foundation. Each client has their timeline for length of stay, but will typically live at the residence from two to six months.

“Virginia Home for Boys and Girls and Side by Side share a mission to provide care to young people in crisis. Our trauma-informed approach is infused into all of our transitional living services, including our Independent Living Arrangement (ILA) program that provides a strong foundation for Pride Place at VHBG,” said Claiborne Warner, VHBG president.

The Pride Place at VHBG program will be located in two brick homes on VHBG’s 30+ acre campus in Henrico County. Originally built to house staff, these well-equipped homes provide private bedrooms, and communal living and kitchen space.

One of the homes recently underwent a complete remodel through a donation from Lowe’s Home Improvement. Lowe’s also recently provided kitchen appliances for use in the second home. Homes are fully furnished and equipped with necessities including bedding and kitchen gear thanks to volunteers from Thalhimers, Pay It Forward, and Costco.

Pride Place at VHBG brings together two strong, successful nonprofits, drawing the perfect blend of expertise in independent living arrangements, trauma-informed care, LGBTQ+ specific needs, and youth services to reach a specific population of homeless young people who otherwise are likely to face living on the streets.

“With the COVID-19 pandemic, we are expediting our efforts to match the rapidly growing need. The moratorium on evictions extends only till May 31, so our partnership launch is in time for a possible spike in homelessness. Our homes are already constructed for independent living situations and our organizational partnership formed before the pandemic, so we can move quickly and anticipate opening the homes in June to meet the immediate need,” stated Warner.

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MORE INFORMATION

ABOUT THE ISSUE

- Side by Side along with partners at the Nationz Foundation and the Virginia Anti-Violence Project launched a Host Home program last year but recognized that multiple safe and affirming housing options for youth were needed.
- LGBTQ+ youth are at a greater risk for homelessness. 40 percent of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+, yet LGBTQ+ youth only account for 9 percent of the youth population.
- Locally, the Youth Count study by **Advocates for Richmond Youth** showed 35% of youth in Richmond who are experiencing housing instability identify as LGBTQ+.
- LGBTQ+ youth face homelessness and housing instability at disproportional and alarming rates, but there are currently few housing services in our region specifically for them to address this problem.
- Family conflict is the most common cause of all youth homelessness. For LGBTQ+ youth, in particular, the conflict tends to be over their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness are more likely to be robbed, physically or sexually assaulted, or be a victim of a hate crime.
- A 2019 report from the Williams Institute noted that 22% of the LGBTQ+ community live in poverty compared to 16% of the general population, putting our LGBTQ+ youth at risk for falling through the cracks and into homelessness.
- LGBTQ+ people, particularly LGBTQ+ young adults, are overrepresented in the restaurant and food industry, which has been devastated by the pandemic.
- LGBTQ+ youth often don't have a family connection to fall back on and seek support from. As a result, those who are newly unemployed are not far from being newly homeless.
- One of the homes recently underwent a complete remodel thanks to the generosity of **Lowe's Home Improvement**. Lowe's also recently donated kitchen appliances for use in the second home.
- Homes are fully furnished and equipped with necessities including bedding and kitchen gear thanks to volunteers from **Thalhimers, Pay It Forward, and Costco**.
- Participants of the Pride Place at VHBG program will also have access to VHBG's ILA Commons, a communal gathering space that includes a computer room, exercise room, relaxation room, and recreational equipment.
- Side by Side regularly receives referrals from other homeless services agencies including **Homeward**, the **Possibilities Project**, and the **McKinney Vento Project**. Additionally, Side by Side has built strong relationships with **St. Joseph's Villa** and their new youth outreach program to identify youth experiencing homelessness in the City as well as **Commonwealth Catholic Charities** and **Advocates for Richmond Youth's** new Youth Hub. Referrals are also received from local foster care agencies, youth detention centers, and area hospitals.

ABOUT THE PARTNERS

Founded in 1991, Side by Side (formerly ROSMY) continues to be the only nonprofit organization in Central Virginia that directly addresses the unique needs and the healthy social development of LGBTQ+ youth. They began by holding support groups in church basements and have grown over the years to meet increasing and diversified needs, including expanding programming to directly address middle school-aged youth, youth of color, transgender youth, and most recently, youth experiencing homelessness.

Virginia Home for Boys and Girls (VHBG) is a nonprofit organization that has been serving children in crisis since 1846. VHBG is no longer an orphanage but provides transitional living services, specialized education, and therapeutic resources to youth with emotional and behavioral health concerns. The trauma-informed care youth receive in their group homes, independent living apartments, specialized K-12 school), and therapeutic resource center restores hope to them and their families who then find the courage to thrive.