

Grants address homelessness

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Grants to fund Housing Stability programs in the Twin Cities region in an effort to address the underlying issues which may cause homelessness, was announced by Greater Twin Cities United Way. With an annual commitment of \$4.6 million, the grants will support individuals, families and youth who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The three-year grants – awarded after an open and competitive review process – total nearly \$14 million and supports 38 of United Way's highest-rated housing stability programs in the metro area. Funding ensures individuals will have housing, be provided shelter and intervention services, and immediate emergency assistance. United Way's Director of Basic Needs Marcia Fink says investment in these programs focuses on providing housing services. The faster we can move families from shelters to an apartment or sustainable housing, the better. Stable housing means having a mailing address when seeking employment or for children going to school."

More than a half-million people in the metro area live in poverty, which signifies an above average demand for social services. "We recognize the number of people in need remains high. Youth homelessness increased 40 percent since 2006. Experts attribute this to a number of factors including the Recession and unemployment," explains United Way Chief Operating Officer Ben Knoll. He continues, "Our donors expect United Way, as stewards of their contributions, to invest in the highest quality programs. Program funding, which goes into effect January 2012, will also aid north Minneapolis residents impacted by the recent tornado which devastated some areas that were already struggling. "These grants are for long-term housing needs and legal services. A community's recovery from a natural disaster doesn't happen in a matter of weeks or months – it can take years," says Basic Needs Committee Chair Dave Vander Haar.

It means having the support services to stay in the home and to break the generational cycle of poverty," says Marcia Fink. She stresses, "Families, children, racial and ethnic minorities, youth; all of the aforementioned deserve stability, which is a step towards self-sufficiency."