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Addressing the homeless population amid COVID-19 pandemic



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MANKATO, Minn. (KEYC) - While many have the option to stay home and protect themselves amid the COVID-19 pandemic, right now people experiencing homelessness are among the most vulnerable.

Locally, The Salvation Army's Men's Shelter in Mankato will remain open until its usual April 1 closure for the season. However staff, clients and volunteers are remaining the recommended six feet apart. But to limit human contact, public showers or laundry are temporarily unavailable.

Those staying at the Mankato Connection's Ministry Shelter were able to be moved into the Hilton Garden Inn temporarily for social distancing. This was made possible by organizations and community outreach including a \$5,000 grant from Greater Mankato United Way and Mankato Area Foundation.

Connection Ministry is a smaller shelter that works with its clients to move into permanent housing. Those staying at the hotel will be there till the Connection's shelter season ends on April 13.

"The hardest part for us is that we can only really take care of a small group who we have been working and who happen to be at our shelter at this point," said Rev. and Shelter Co-Director, Erica Koser.

While Partners for Affordable housing's shelters in Mankato and St. Peter are able to accommodate social distancing, Executive Director Jen Theneman says they are also looking to help assist in any way they can.

"You know we have some folks who have lost tier jobs, if they have difficulty paying for their medications or buying things for their family... that we can step in and help. We want to help fill that gap," Theneman said.

In addition, Connection Ministry's free daily breakfast and Salvation Army's noon meals are still on, just in grab-and-go fashion.

In response, organizations are reaching out to the community. For more information on how you can donate supplies or funds to area shelters and organizations, visit the links below.

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