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St. Paul Public Housing Agency Celebrates 35 Years of Congregate Housing Services Program (CHSP)

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Information about the PHA is also posted at: www.stpha.org

On Wednesday, November 15, 2017 the Saint Paul Public Housing Agency (PHA) will celebrate the 35th anniversary of a unique public housing program that prevents unnecessary institutionalization of frail elderly persons and persons with disabilities. The event will be held at the PHA's apartment building at 280 Ravoux Street in St. Paul (across Marion Street from Sears), with a short program beginning at 2:30 p.m.

CHSP serves more than 100 residents in PHA highrise apartment buildings, providing case coordination, housekeeping, daily meals and monitoring plus other needed services. CHSP participants receive two nutritious, well-balanced meals every day of the year, including weekends and holidays. Both meals are catered by Presbyterian Homes and Services' Optage Senior Dining Choices. The noon meal is provided to eligible CHSP participants under Title III of the Older Americans Act, through the Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging.

In addition to the 280 Ravoux Street location, CHSP operates at two PHA buildings on the East Side, 1000 Edgerton Street and 1743 East Iowa Street; and at 1085 Montreal Avenue near West 7th Street and Lexington Avenue. As of September 2017 a total of 115 clients were served by the program, including clients who were served on a temporary basis.

CHSP is licensed by the State of Minnesota as a "home management program" that combines affordable housing with non-medical services that help participants live independently and avoid unnecessary nursing home, group home or other placement. CHSP staff provides scheduled weekly housekeeping and laundry services, as well as daily "wellness checks," socialization opportunities, and social services coordination. In one recent year CHSP served a total of 168 residents, providing about 55,000 meals,

7,000 hours of housekeeping, and 4,000 hours of case management services.

Like other public housing residents, CHSP participants pay 30% of their adjusted income for rent; and they pay for the CHSP services on a sliding scale based on income.

The PHA's current budget for this program is about \$2 million, including the HUD CHSP grant of about \$800,000. The PHA's average per-resident annual cost for CHSP housing and services is around \$12,200. For comparison, the median annual cost for a private nursing home room in a Minnesota metropolitan area is around \$100,000.

Congress earmarks funds in each HUD Appropriations Act to continue funding existing CHSP programs. Typically HUD has approved one-year grant renewals with a modest increase above the funding level from the previous year (historically in the 2.0% range). There is no guarantee of long term CHSP funding, despite the program's success in providing needed services at reasonable costs since 1982.

"We're proud of the way CHSP helps so many public housing residents avoid premature hospitalization or nursing home placement by remaining healthy and self-reliant in their homes," says PHA Executive Director Jon Gutzmann. "For over 40 years, CHSP has been generating savings in health care costs while promoting residents' well-being. It works, and it stands ready to be taken to scale."

Resident Highlight

Mike, 53 years old, once lived in a mental institution and later moved into a PHA high-rise that did not provide CHSP services. He was on the verge of eviction and at risk of becoming homeless because of his hoarding behavior, poor personal hygiene, anti-social tendencies, and malnutrition. Mike voluntarily transferred to a PHA high-rise with CHSP services, and his life changed. He now cooperates with CHSP staff to maintain his apartment on a regular basis, and he participates in daily meals, even dining in the community room with fellow residents. He seeks out staff to assist him with his daily routine and regularly interacts with others. He enjoys walks in his neighborhood and arranges his own medical appointments. Mike continues to have challenges with his mental illness, but his quality of life as well as his self-esteem have improved dramatically, due in part to CHSP. Mike says simply, "I like living here, and it makes me happy to be in a safe place."

Interested persons can learn more about the CHSP and submit applications on the PHA's website, www.stpha.org.

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