

# NEWS RELEASE

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## United Way Fox Cities

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## United Way Fox Cities Awards \$200,000 Innovative Grant to Homeless Connections

United Way Fox Cities has awarded an Innovative Grant in the amount of \$200,000 to Homeless Connection's Diversion Program to address the needs of people on the waiting list for shelter.

Homeless Connections, a United Way partner agency, works to end homelessness by connecting individuals and families to resources that promote self-sufficiency and prevent future episodes of homelessness. The organization currently offers four core programs: Shelter, Case Management, Prevention, and Street Outreach. All four programs are funded by United Way Fox Cities.

"This grant is a perfect fit for our Innovative Granting criteria," said Tony Gonzalez, vice president of Community Development for United Way. "Innovative Grants address an underlying cause of an identified community need, and are done in collaboration with other partners. The Diversion Program supports United Way's goal of all individuals and families having financial stability."

Through a recent continuous improvement and strategic planning process, Homeless Connections determined that the most significant problem facing the organization is the number of people being turned away for shelter. Although the shelter can accommodate 78 people per day, the program consistently maintains a waiting list ranging from 26 to 70 people.

The Diversion Program will target individuals and families who have an immediate risk of homelessness, when they first contact the shelter. Typically, they are people who have already lost their permanent housing and are either precariously housed or doubled-up with family and friends. Rather than going on the shelter waiting list and postponing services until they eventually enter shelter, the Diversion Program will provide services at first contact.

Case Management will ensure clients have a safe place to stay, connect them with more stable housing, plan for long-term economic security, and connect with educational programs. Homeless Connections will work with the Appleton Area School District so children remain in school. They will also partner with Fox Valley Technical College to offer opportunities for adults to improve their long-term self-sufficiency.

The Rapid Re-housing component will identify housing options, provide rental assistance and provide financial assistance to address barriers to housing, such as lack of a security deposit, delinquent utilities, or unpaid rent.

Jerome Martin, executive director of Homeless Connections said, “Over the past couple of years, we’ve had a lot of people who were experiencing homelessness, but could not immediately access shelter because all of our 78 beds were occupied. Unfortunately, people in this situation are forced to wait to enter shelter and consequently, do not receive services which prolongs their homeless episode. Thanks to United Way Fox Cities, we’re able to begin delivering services to them as soon as they appear on our radar and ultimately, may be able to prevent them from having to come into shelter entirely.”

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*United Way Fox Cities fights for the health, education and financial stability of every person.*