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Cover Sheet---Social Service Activity

AGENCY NAME: **Amherst Community Connections**

AGENCY ADDRESS: **236 N Pleasant Street, Amherst, MA**

AGENCY PHONE #: **413-345-0737**

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CDBG FUNDING REQUEST: **\$50,000**

1. **Project Name:** Amherst Community Connections One-Stop Resource Center

2. **Project Description:** To build on the success of the One-Stop Resource Center, which was funded by CDBG in 2018, ACC will continue to help individuals and families who are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to gain housing stability, and to become economically self-sufficient. The One-Stop Resource Center is the key to ACC's homelessness prevention, rapid re-housing, and supportive housing work.

3. **Project Location:** Amherst Community Connections- 236 North Pleasant Street, Amherst, MA

4. **Budget Request:** \$50,000.00

5. **Type of Activity:**

Household (family and individual) stabilization

Support services for the homeless

Youth Development

Economic Self-sufficiency (adult education)

Food and Nutrition

Health Services

Other (ACC also provides supportive housing)

6. **National Objective:** Objective # 1 – benefiting low income/ extremely low income/homeless households

- Total Number of beneficiaries (individuals served): 300 (with \$50,000 funding)
- Total Low/Moderate beneficiaries (individuals served): Same as above

National Objective Description:

Amherst Community Connections' (ACC) One-Stop Resource Center meets the first of the three national CDBG objectives: benefiting low- and moderate-income individuals and families from Amherst and surrounding towns. ACC provides ongoing case management support and financial assistance for individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Their income in general is at about 20% AMI --lower than the low- and moderate-income households (80% to 120%) and well within the HUD qualification of "extremely low income"¹. This population has very thin margin of error and experiences on-going housing hardship.

Income and household size are documented by self-declaration.

A. Demonstrate Consistency with Community Development Strategy:

ACC's mission is consistent with the following 2019 Community Development Strategy priorities for social services:

- 1) Supporting individual and family stabilization
- 2) Support services for the homeless
- 3) Helping households attain economic self-sufficiency

Thanks to the generous \$40,000 CDBG funding for ACC's One-Stop Resource Center, in 2018, ACC was able to hire additional caseworkers to provide consistent and one-on-one assistance to all who come to the Center for help, especially those who experience chronic homelessness. As a result of this funding and the work of skilled community volunteers and interns, the Center was able to provide services to over 700 unique individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Collectively, they made over 5,000 visits/contacts with the workers at the Center in 2018.

The purpose of the Amherst Community Connections' One-Stop Resource Center is to provide a comprehensive and consistent range of assistance daily, year-round, both on-site and in the community (Jones Library Information and Referral Desk, and street outreach), to individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming of homeless. ACC also provides assistance by phone/text message, email and home visits. The Center is open 9 hours a day from 8:30 to 5:30 pm for walk-ins/by appointment. Case management at the Center is individualized and can range from preventative work to keep participants from becoming homeless, to providing ACC's housing to participants with more intensive housing-based supports when appropriate.

Stabilization of households' circumstances begins by ensuring that their vital needs (shelter, nourishment, health care, emergency assistance) are met in a timely and effective manner. Progress to greater self-sufficiency is supported over the long term through a trauma-informed, individualized service plan to meet housing, employment, health and educational goals.

The stabilization that ACC aims to provide for these families and individuals can also impact health outcomes, another social service priority area for 2019. The American Public Health Association (APHA) has called ending homelessness a public health issue and recognizes homelessness as a contributing factor in poor health outcomes, including a mortality risk that is 1.5-11.5 times greater than

¹ <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/home/home-income-limits/>

that of the general population.² Additionally, the APHA found that unsheltered living can exacerbate chronic conditions, such as diabetes and hepatitis C, both of which are more prevalent among the homeless than the general population. Their living conditions also make it difficult for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing vulnerability to follow complex treatment regimens for these conditions, and presents “significant barriers to medication adherence,” an important factor in treatment outcomes.³

In addition to assisting participants with the MassHealth application, connecting them with local medical, and mental health providers in the community, and extending Planet Fitness gym passes to participants, the One-Stop Resource Center plays a vital role in serving community members with disabilities and addiction by providing ACC’s Supportive Housing Program to the chronically homeless. Regarding the public health benefits of supportive housing, the Center for Health Care Strategies has stated, “given the increasing focus on social determinants of health, policymakers are recognizing that stable housing is critical to improving health outcomes and reducing health care spending.”⁴ Thus, while not directly providing healthcare services, the One-Stop Resource Center supports better health outcomes for our participants by helping them access insurance and medical care, preventing episodes of homelessness, encouraging participants who are active substance users toward harm reduction and decreased substance abuse, and supporting better health outcomes by helping our participants secure permanent, safe, and affordable housing.

B. Agency Information

The mission of Amherst Community Connections is to empower, advocate for, and assist members of the Amherst community. The Board of Directors is composed of former/current clients and community members who actively work with people who are in need. Because of this community-based board, ACC is able to provide programs that truly reflect and meet the diverse needs of the Amherst community. See the attachment for the list of ACC’s Board of Directors.

ACC is the only social service agency in Amherst that consistently focuses on the social service needs of individuals full-time and year-round. Since 2009, ACC has provided intensive case management and advocacy services to homeless, disabled, elderly, formerly incarcerated, and low-income individuals and families at multiple public sites, including ACC’s downtown office, Jones Library, and the Hampshire County Jail and House of Corrections.

We bring together talented and diverse staff, volunteers and interns who care deeply about the participants and strive to be a steady presence for people who need advocacy and assistance. Our goal is to help individuals and families become financially self-sufficient and have stable housing.

Brief Agency History:

- 2011-Present: ACC’s Collaboration with Jones Library

From 2011 to the present, ACC has staffed the Help Desk at the Jones Library, helping library patrons access information and referrals on local social and emergency services and housing.

² <https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2018/01/18/housing-and-homelessness-as-a-public-health-issue>

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25428404>

⁴ <https://www.chcs.org/topics/supportive-housing/>

Patrons meet with ACC case workers for immediate advocacy and case management. ACC provides the Help Desk service two afternoons a week, assisting 15-20 patrons each week. On average, over 800 library patrons are assisted each year.

- **2012-Present: ACC works with inmates at the Hampshire County Jail**

In 2012, ACC began its formal relationship with the Hampshire County Jail and House of Correction. Every month, ACC workers attend a re-entry meeting in the Jail and meet with inmates who have family or employment ties to Amherst in the Jail facility. ACC assists them to meet their housing, employment, or parole/probation goals when they are released. Over the past seven years, a couple of hundred inmates have received support while they are still incarcerated or after they are released. Because of the many barriers that formerly incarcerated individuals face when they reenter society, including securing housing and employment, these individuals benefit from intensive case management and housing supports. Housing has been found to be a potential “pathway to successful reentry,” and has been shown to support positive outcomes such as reduced recidivism and increased public health and public safety.⁵ By proactively engaging with those in the reentry process, ACC is providing critical support to a population at high risk of homelessness; by connecting these individuals with a wide spectrum of individualized supports, ACC can help these individuals avoid homelessness upon reentry, which can significantly reduce recidivism.⁶

- **2013-2015: ACC’s Transitional Housing Program**

The people that ACC serves face multifaceted obstacles to stabilizing their lives. Due to low or nonexistent income, criminal background and/or rental history, and the lack of affordable housing, it is almost impossible for these people to get off the streets and to rebuild their lives without effective advocacy and assistance. In 2013, ACC began a pilot project, “Amherst Transitional Housing Program,” to provide housing and support service to people who are homeless in Amherst.

The Transitional Housing Program operated an 8-bedroom duplex housing up to 8 residents at a time. When the pilot program completed in early 2015, it had housed over 30 residents. Of the 21 who graduated from the Program, 19 secured housing or employment/social security benefits.

- **2015 - Present: ACC’s One-Stop Resource Center**

In November 2015, to better serve Amherst areas residents in need - the poor, disabled, elderly, formerly incarcerated, and the homeless - ACC began a pilot “**One-Stop Resource Center**” on the first floor of the downtown Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst. The Center provided a comprehensive array of social services to help those in need. The goal of the Program was, and still is, to assist participants to become stabilized and eventually to become self-sufficient.

In October 2017, ACC moved to a new downtown location, and the One-Stop Resource Center doubled its office space. With access to a kitchen, a research lab, a conference room, and an intake room, up-to-date computers/printer/phone/fax equipment, and readily available and

⁵ [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/24206/412957-Examining-Housing-as-a-Pathway-to-Successful-Reentry -A-Demonstration-Design-Process.PDF](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/24206/412957-Examining-Housing-as-a-Pathway-to-Successful-Reentry-A-Demonstration-Design-Process.PDF)

⁶ <https://www.voa.org/homelessness-and-prisoner-reentry>

knowledgeable advocates and staff, the Center has been a safe haven that offers a welcoming refuge to the weary and homeless from 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM every weekday, year-round.

The One-Stop Resource Center has now completed its third year of operation. Thanks to the CDBG's funding in 2018, the Center is able to operate with two additional paid case workers. In 2018, the Center served an estimated 740 individuals and families. This is a 12% increase over 2017. Collectively they made nearly 5,800 visits/contacts with ACC's workers, which is an over 50% increase. The following factors might have contributed to the increase:

- Increased need in the community
- Increased outreach by ACC through phone, texting, email, home visit, and street outreach
- Increased referrals by 211 hotlines, hospitals, housing authorities, and service agencies
- Increased ACC's physical space, and case management capacity
- Increased ACC's Supportive Housing program: from 3 vouchers to 6.

The sheer number of individuals and families served and number of contacts they made with ACC through its One-Stop Resource Center is a testament to the need in the community and to the Center's strong capacity. **See the attached graphs and table for the One-Stop Resource Center, 2016-18**

The Center also provides intensive support service to the dozen or so Supportive Housing participants, who are disabled and have been chronically homeless for 15-20 years, residing in or on the waitlist for ACC's transitional housing units. The Center's ongoing intensive support services to individuals in our Supportive Housing Program are necessary to continue to grow the Program into its next phase and continue to help participants achieve housing stability and self-sufficiency.

2016-Present: Supportive Housing Program: Phase I (2016-2019), and Phase II (2018-2022)
ACC receives 2 grants from Community Preservation Act Committee to house Amherst residents who have been chronically homeless. ACC currently manages 6 housing units, all of which are located on bus routes and in downtown or village centers. ACC provides ongoing wrap-around support service to the Program participants. Each unit houses 1 participant. So far, Phase I has graduated 7 participants. These graduates were homeless on average 15-20 years with severe, disabling conditions that contributed to their extensive homelessness. With a range of rigorous and structured set of supportive service offered by the One-Stop Resource Center workers, it only took them on average 9 months before they got their own permanent housing vouchers and moved out of ACC's housing units. Supportive housing has been shown to have a positive impact on housing stability, employment, and physical and mental health for those it serves.⁷ It is a cost-effective intervention that reduces participants' use of costly emergency services and creates greater accessibility to stable housing for those with disabilities.⁸

2018 and Beyond: To better serve and become more responsive to the needs of our Center's over 700 individuals and families, if funded again by the CDBG grant, ACC is looking to expand its program in the following areas:

⁷ <https://www.csh.org/toolkit/public-housing-agencies-toolkit/primer-on-homelessness-and-supportive-housing/supportive-housing/>

⁸ <https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/supportive-housing-helps-vulnerable-people-live-and-thrive-in-the-community>

Supportive Housing Phase III: At ACC, we believe the service provided by the One-Stop Resource Center is strengthened and will be more effective when housing is part of the support service. In Massachusetts, there are only enough affordable housing units for less than half of the people who are eligible for them, leaving an affordable housing gap.⁹ Due to the continued need for supportive housing and the persistent number of chronically homeless population in Amherst, ACC is applying through CPA for Phase III Supportive Housing grant for 3 more housing vouchers for 2019-2022.

Rental Subsidy Program: In addition, ACC is applying through CPA for a 3-year grant for 6 rental subsidies for extremely low-income Amherst residents who are paying more than 50% of their gross income toward rent and are facing evictions. Each subsidy comes with maximum \$400 of rent subsidy per month for up to three years. Along with the rent subsidy, tenants will work with the One-Stop Resource Center to get into permanent subsidized housing, increase their income, and to learn financial budgeting. This Rental Subsidy Program would greatly enhance the Resource Center's effectiveness.

CORI Sealing Project: To ensure a smoother and more expedient application process for public housing and employment by ACC's participants, ACC has secured the pro-bono legal service of an attorney to review and, if applicable, to seal their CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information). ACC has found negative CORI to be one of the most significant barriers to obtaining housing and employment for our participants.

Documents Replacement Project: Due to years on the street without stable housing, many participants either have expired or have lost these 3 legal documents: ID, birth certificate, and Social Security Card. These documents are necessary to secure housing and employment. It costs upward of \$50 or more to replace them. To eliminate this particular housing and employment barrier, ACC has committed to secure funding to pay 100% of the cost.

Representative Payee Program: To help some of our most challenged participants to establish credit history, rental history, and to help them improve their bill-paying ability once they are housed, ACC plans to explore working with local agencies such as Highland Valley Elder Services, Eliot Homeless Services, and Central Hampshire Veterans' Services to begin a Representative Payee Program. Currently, the only re-payee service for non-elders in Massachusetts is in Fall River. This location is not accessible for many of our Center's clientele.

How Effective is the One-Stop Resource Center?

Through the help of workers at the One-Stop Resource Center, many individuals and families have seen their income increase, either through employment or public benefits programs---such as rent subsidies, SNAP or Social Security. Many participants have secured housing and are off the streets or have paid their rent or electricity arrears and staved off homelessness. Others have received financial assistance from the Center for free bus passes, medication assistance, money orders for applying for state ID or birth certificate, and other necessities. Of the more than 700 households who came to ACC's One-Stop Resource Center for assistance in 2018, all of them have been treated with care and respect. Many share

⁹ <http://westernmasshousingfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Report-on-Homelessness-in-Western-Mass-Nov-16-2018-1.pdf>

their suffering with ACC workers and feel their challenges have been heard. To quote what one mom who came here as an immigrant with her family from Nigeria said last November to us, *“I am struggling with my family daily, but I always feel hopeful when I come to ACC. Hope is what I have and that no one can take it away from me.”*

The yearly total number of housing-insecure individuals and families served by the Center has grown steadily since the Center began its operation in late 2015 and early 2016. Between 2017 and 2018, the Center has served over 10% more households, from 660 households in 2017 to the estimated 700+ in 2018. The number of contacts and visits with Center’s workers has jumped by over 50%, from 3,712 contacts/visits in 2017 to the estimated 5700+ in 2018. **For the 3-year comparisons, see the attached Graphs and percentage growth Table.**

The Resource Center’s growth in the last two years is a testament to the growing needs of the community, and to the increasing capacity of ACC to meet these needs. About 150 of the more than 700 participants are homeless, and the rest are experiencing financial hardship and are at risk of becoming homeless. The majority of ACC’s clients seek assistance in housing, public benefits application, and employment assistance. The two additional paid caseworkers--- thanks to the CDBG 2018 funding to ACC’s One Stop Resource Center, have served our participants well. We are able to do more preventative outreach via email/phone calls/texting and home visits, in addition to having a strong office presence.

The One-Stop Resource Center provides an essential case management element to ACC’s other housing-focused supports. Case management interventions have been connected to “increased housing stability; increased engagement in medical and nonmedical services; reduced use of high cost health system services; improved mental health status; reduced use of drug and alcohol; and improved quality of life” for homeless individuals.¹⁰ Use of other resources that the One-Stop Resource Center provides leads to increased case management contacts, which in turn supports these better long-term outcomes.

The One-Stop Resource Center is also an essential support to the long-term outcomes of ACC’s other, more intensive programming. Over the past two years, ACC has been awarded funds for 6 housing vouchers for its Supportive Housing Program for the chronically homeless. Thanks to the intensive and individualized case management provided by the Center, the program has been very successful: so far 7 chronically homeless individuals have graduated from the Program and received their own permanent housing vouchers from Amherst Public Housing Authority. The current 6 tenants who live in ACC’s supportive housing have seen their personal income or public benefits increased by thousands of dollars per year through their diligent work with Resource Center caseworkers. The support service provided by the Resource Center is the engine for the continued success of the Supportive Housing Program. Participants who graduate from our Supportive Housing Program, and, if funded, the recipients of the 6 rental subsidies from Rental Subsidy Program, will also have the same quality case management support of the Resource Center to support them in maintaining housing and income in future years.

Open hours for walk-in services at the One-Stop Resource Center allows ACC to respond immediately to housing crises, functioning as both a preventative and responsive intervention. ACC recognizes the

¹⁰ <https://www.nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/in-focus-case-management-hrsa-approved-final-version.pdf>

importance of responding to housing crises with a sense of urgency, as more time spent homeless results in poorer long-term outcomes in a variety of areas.¹¹

Prevention work is essential for making homelessness rare in our community. With the One-Stop Resource Center, in addition to our outreach efforts at the Jones Library and Hampshire County Jail and House of Corrections, ACC addresses the two recommended areas of homelessness prevention work: helping to keep people in their own housing through case management and other more intensive programming; and providing resources to people when they are leaving an institutional setting and have no housing.¹²

Families in Need: Recently, just before the holidays, two local families with children ranging from 5 to 14 years old came to the Center requesting assistance. Due to non-payment of rent, each was involved with the housing court and facing imminent eviction. With funds from ACC and other sources, each was able to pay their rent arrears and remain housed. After the emergency was dealt with, ACC worked with them to budget and trim expenses such as cable service or phone service to ensure that neither family will face this emergency again in the near future.

In another case, an elderly couple, who had been relying solely on social security and had been sleeping in their car for the past few winters, came into ACC. They did not have a good credit or housing history, so it was difficult for them to get into housing on their own. Due to her worsening medical condition, they needed emergency housing to prevent them from perishing on the street in the winter weather. Working with Cooley Dickinson Hospital's medical social workers, ACC staff immediately helped them file for emergency housing with 14 regional housing authorities. Based on ACC's recent track record of obtaining state housing vouchers in as little as three to six months, ACC is hopeful that they will be able to receive their voucher while she is recuperating at a local nursing home.

By addressing participants' situations holistically, in the same place with the same agency and the same case workers, one step at a time, participants are able to adopt a coherent working plan to improve their circumstances. The One-Stop Resource Center is the only service of this type and magnitude in the Amherst area. It complements the similar service provided by the Hampshire Resource Center in Northampton, which is operated by ServiceNet.

Lack of affordable housing has been widely recognized as a root cause of homelessness. This is evident in our own community: more than 40% of Amherst residents spend more than 50% of their income on housing, which is classified by HUD as "extreme rent burden," making them more vulnerable to homelessness.^{13,14,15} While ACC is working to implement new programming specifically tailored toward addressing the affordable housing gap, the One-Stop Resource Center continues to play an essential role in connecting Amherst residents who experience extreme rent burden and are more vulnerable to homelessness with resources to keep them from becoming homeless as they work toward greater stability. Rent-burdened households have been found to have higher eviction rates and wider use of

¹¹ <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Rapid-Re-Housing-Brief.pdf>

¹² <http://westernmasshousingfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Report-on-Homelessness-in-Western-Mass-Nov-16-2018-1.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/43889/Amherst-Housing-Production-Plan?bidId=>

¹⁴ https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr_edge_featd_article_092214.html

¹⁵ <https://endhomelessness.org/report-affordable-housing-increasingly-unavailable-to-low-income-renters/>

social safety net programs.¹⁶ The Center can provide a valuable preventative support to these families who are struggling to maintain their housing.

Knowledgeable Workers: The pool of caseworkers is made up of professional staff and trained volunteers in social work, nursing, law, education, mental health, and other fields. They bring a rich variety of talents and skills to our work. Caseworkers are well-versed in empowering participants, initiating assessments of their needs, identifying and accessing useful resources. They produce user-friendly information materials that help participants overcome the obstacles in their search for housing and employment and refer participants to resources that help them take action to solve their problems.

Empowerment-Based Approach: The Center's daily posting of client-appropriate job and housing listings have been used by ACC participants, homeless shelter guests and re-entry officers at the Hampshire correctional facility. Our resources are available both online and in hard copies. Weekly views of the postings total a couple hundred. No other agencies provide such a daily digest of accessible housing and employment openings. To make it to the list, housing must be under \$650, on a bus route, local, and reachable by phone—since many ACC participants do not use computer. Listed jobs have to be on a bus route, local, low barrier and CORI friendly. Many ACC participants have obtained housing and employment because of this service provided by the Center.

Client-Centered Case Management: Through ACC's experience working with at-risk households, we have learned that household stabilization is not merely a matter of meeting vital needs, such as shelter or housing, employment, income, or benefits. Stabilization also involves developing the inner strength to navigate uncertain situations with unknown outcomes, the willingness to receive support from others, and the initiative to improve one's situation. ACC caseworkers encourage participants to employ their own skills and strengths to address personal challenges. We encourage taking small steps forward, despite fear of the uncertain. We have noticed that some participants who have income remain homeless because they worry about investing so much of their small income on a housing arrangement that might fall through, which would land them in an even worse situation. While acknowledging their concerns, we reassure our participants that we will help them access financial and other types of support to obtain housing and stay housed and conduct the housing search with them. The core of the Center's work is ACC = workers + knowledge + 1:1 working relationship. In essence, the Center has knowledgeable workers who develop a trusting one-on-one relationship working with the participants to assist them in reaching their housing and economic self-sufficiency goals. The one-on-one participant-focused case management with the self-empowerment model has produced excellent results.

Convenient Schedules and Locations: Our office hours total 45 hours per week: 8:30 am to 5:30 pm every weekday. It is the only resource center in Amherst that is both open this many hours per week, year-round. We provide twice as many hours of service to the public as the program in Northampton does. This schedule is coordinated with the 8 am closing of Craig's Doors during the shelter season. Shelter guests who leave the shelter at 8 am can access the Center's supportive services as soon as the Shelter is closed. In addition, we also provide the same service off-site at the Jones Library every Tuesday and Thursday from 2-5 pm, year-round.

¹⁶ <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2018/04/american-families-face-a-growing-rent-burden>

ACC's Short-term Goals: In order to remove housing barriers to housing for the homeless individuals and families, ACC is focuses on the following short-term goals:

- **Representative Payee:** ACC will do a feasibility study on setting up an in-house representative payee program to help homeless households to manage their budget and to ensure their bills are paid on time.
- **CORI Review and Sealing:** ACC will work with its in-house attorney to help clients review and seal their CORI, if appropriate.
- **Documents Replacement Project:** ACC will write a grant to create a Documents Replacement Fund to help clients pay for the costs of replacing the essential housing-related documents: ID's, birth certificates, and social security cards.
- **Additional Housing Options:** ACC is applying to CPA for its Phase (III) Supportive Housing funding for 3 additional vouchers for the chronically homeless, and 6 rental subsidies for the rent-burdened/at risk households.

ACC's Long-term Goals:

- Partner with Valley CDC to provide supportive service to the residents of the upcoming 16-40 studio apartments for the homeless
- Collaborate with Amherst Housing Authority to explore applying for HUD's housing vouchers for the homeless via the Section 811 Mainstream Housing Choice Voucher Program
- Support Amherst Affordable Housing Trust plan to build affordable housing on East Street building site
- Create permanent supportive housing options for chronically homeless residents in Amherst
- Support ultra-affordable housing options for extremely low- and no-income individuals
- Advocate to increase mental health and substance treatment services in Amherst
- Apply for grant funding to develop rental subsidies programs for homeless or housing-insecure households

C. Project Budget Information

The total annual budget for the One-Stop Resource Center is \$66,550 (**See attached Program Budget**). This covers the part-time salary and benefits of a case manager and a caseworker. It also covers the non-personnel costs such as office rent, professional insurance, client assistance and other operating costs.

ACC is requesting \$50,000 funding from CDBG. ACC will commit additional funds of \$16,550 to meet the One-Stop Resource Center operating budget.

As a point of reference, while ACC's One-Stop Resource Center opens 45 hours a week, our counterpart in Northampton opens about 20 hours a week and employs 3 ½ FTE workers¹⁷. The difference lies in ACC's ability to attract and retain high quality interns, and volunteers with professional backgrounds in law, clinical social work, nursing, education, and human service. ACC is very proud to be able to provide more service but at a considerably lower cost.

Budgeting Experience: The budget is prepared by ACC's founder and executive director, Hwei-Ling Greeney. Ms. Greeney established Amherst Community Connections in 2009 to serve the housing and support service needs of the disfranchised, including the homeless, disabled, and incarcerated. From

¹⁷Site visit and meeting with Katie Mierneki, director of ServiceNet Shelter and Housing Services, September, 2016

2009 to the present, the agency has enjoyed a tremendous growth in its capacity to serve the needy and homeless, and yet the budget remains lean and healthy. The number of participants served has more than doubled to the current 700+ clients this year. Her ability to seek funding sources and expertise in delineating line items for clean and clear accounting has served the Agency well. Even with the difficulties that non-profit organizations have experienced during the past economic downturns, Ms. Greeney has managed to lead the organization toward a very financially stable direction.

The various multi-year grants ACC is administering this year as a contractor of the Town of Amherst, require Ms. Greeney to be diligent, accountable, and reliable in balancing the budgets for each grant and paying its vendors for rent, utility, and other service-related costs. The rental companies and Town staff with whom Ms. Greeney works have been very pleased with her handling of the prompt rent payment, finances and budgets.

D. Project Description

ACC is applying for the continuation of funding for its One-Stop Resource Center operation. Last year, ACC was chosen as one of the five agencies to be funded by CDBG. After having applied for CDBG grants for the past five years with various proposals, ACC is very honored to be recognized to be worthy of the financial support from CDBG Committee. With a strong sense of integrity and appreciation for the community's recognition for the need of having a well-staffed resource center serving families and individuals who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless, ACC vows to work hard to serve our community as never before.

The Resource Center opens every weekday from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm. In the morning, drop-ins are welcome; in the afternoon, it is by appointment. On average, 4-5 case workers are on-site in the morning, and 1-2 in the afternoon. Caseworkers are comprised of three professional staff members and trained volunteers/interns. The spacious office is equipped with computers, phones, internet, printer and charging stations. Food and drinks are served throughout the day. Everything is provided for free.

Track Record: As detailed above, the One-Stop Resource Center is a program of Amherst Community Connections that has been in operation since 2015 and has grown significantly since then in available resources and number of people served.

Number of Beneficiaries: This project will serve up to 300 individuals. To be eligible, they must be low income, disabled, or homeless. Through working with caseworkers, participants are guided as they pursue their own goals, such as securing housing, food stamps, social security disability income, employment, etc.

Efficacy of the Program: We estimate that about 75% of the 700+ participants in 2018 at the One-Stop Resource Center have met one or more of their personal goals in getting public benefits such food stamps, social security income, free cell phone; applying for subsidized housing and market rate housing; applying for replacement of housing-related documents such ID, birth certificate, and Social Security cards; and completing resume/cover letter, and job applications. With our knowledge and expertise in the subsidized housing application systems, in 2018, a dozen or more of ACC's participants received permanent housing vouchers.

E. Project Need

The need: Over 700 unique individuals and families sought help at the One-Stop Resource Center in 2018 which is an outgrowth of the 660 household from 2017. The 3712 contacts with workers at the Center in 2017 grew to over 5,700 contacts in 2018. The growths in these areas are evidence that there is an ongoing need in the community for such a resource center that can help community members to obtain assistance in securing housing, employment, public benefit, and other important matters.

Why this project: Currently, in Amherst there is no agency dedicated solely to helping people address individual housing barriers such as criminal background, poor landlord or credit history, lack of income etc. to obtain affordable or subsidized housing. In addition, the number of homeless individuals in the Amherst area appears to be increasing. A regional collaborative approach of this project will help to reduce the increasing homeless population here and strengthen preventative efforts.

F. Community Involvement and Support

Community & Beneficiaries' Involvement: The One-Stop Resource Center grew out of the desperate needs of those who are housing challenged with no place to turn for help. People often refer themselves to the Center. By the word of mouth and ACC's street outreach, beneficiaries share with ACC their needs: housing application/advocacy, social security application/appeal, etc. The Center started out by serving mostly residents in the Amherst area. As the reputation of our effective work has spread, we receive referrals made by professionals from regional and local organizations and entities such as Town of Amherst, Cooley Dickinson Hospital, Mercy Hospital, Clinical Support Options (CSO), ServiceNet, and the 20 plus houses of worships in the surrounding towns. As a result of the community involvement in referring clients to ACC, ACC now works with individuals and families from the surrounding towns: Pelham, Hadley, Belchertown, Sunderland, South Hadley and Granby. The wide-spread referrals explain to some extent the increase in the number of participants who utilize the Resource Center in 2018. The success of the project requires collaboration with other human/social service programs in the community such as Jones Library, Amherst Housing Authority, Amherst Survival Center, Craig's Doors, Eliot Homeless Services, ServiceNet, and Clinical Support Options. ACC has been referring its participants to these programs since its establishment in 2009 and maintains ongoing relationships with these agencies.

Community Support: The support from the community comes in two forms: a) funding and resources donations, and b) volunteer involvement. The number of donors contributing to ACC and the amount of contribution has grown more than 15%. This year, half a dozen of houses of worship are collecting winter gear and survival kits for ACC to distribute, and making regular financial donations to ACC. Also, the fact that the One-Stop Resource Center is able to attract the best qualified community volunteers and the brightest college interns is a testament to the strength of the project.

Letters of Community Support: Letters from private citizens and various public entities are attached.

Implementation Involvement by Beneficiaries:

The implementation of the One-Stop Resource Center grew out of the needs of the beneficiaries. Over the past three years, based on feedback surveys, the Center added these features: separate work stations for additional privacy; monthly fitness passes for physical health promotion; furniture and household gift cards for those who are newly housed, etc. Here is more info:

- a) **Satisfaction Survey:** The survey forms are placed in public places in the office for participants to give feedback on their satisfaction with ACC services and on suggestions for improvement.
- b) **Third-party Assessment:** ACC will invite third-party agencies with a similar mission to

evaluate the project regularly based on agreed upon criteria such as efficacy, effectiveness, timeliness, consumer feedback, etc.

G. Project Feasibility

Feasibility and Demand for the Project: The Amherst One-Stop Resource Center project is feasible because it has been successfully pilot-tested since it began in November 2015. The statistics included in the proposal demonstrated the wide use of the service.

Successful Implementation: The Center's use of professional staffing and supervised volunteers/interns has been successful as a staffing model. The one-on-one support needed to successfully accomplish housing stability and financial self-sufficiency has been made possible by the training and dedication of community volunteers and college interns who work side by side with professional staff.

Roles, Responsibilities, and Internal Controls: Ms. Greeney, the founder and executive director, will be responsible for the hiring, training, and supervision of the caseworkers and community volunteers and interns. She will do the internal controls with the assistance of a bookkeeper and payroll service.

Past projects completion record: Based on the statistics presented in the proposal, ACC has clearly demonstrated that it is capable of proceeding with this project at the time of award. Another indication that ACC has the experience to complete project in a timely manner is its use of CPA funding. In 2016 and 2018, ACC received two 3-year CPA grants for its Supportive Housing program. So far, 7 people have graduated with permanent vouchers and have exited from ACC's housing. Based on ACC's experience operating the Center, it can assure CDBG Committee that it can finish the project in 18 months or less; serve 300 people who are low income, disabled, or homeless; effectively manage the project; and physically and financially accomplish its goals within the grant period.

Project milestones and timeline:

- **Hiring of caseworkers:** Complete the hiring on July 1, 2019 - subject to official contract signing
- **Recruitment, training of volunteers and interns:** Beginning on July 1, 2019, ACC will recruit through the website and in-person at area colleges, UMass, and local civic organizations. The volunteer orientation and training will be provided by the Executive Director on an ongoing basis.
- **Outreach to potential users:** Beginning on July 1, 2019, ACC will distribute promotional materials to the local community via social media, flyers, and emails to human service providers.

H. Project Impact:

Impact: The immediate impact of the Project is that local residents experiencing crises will have timely access to face-to-face human interactions with knowledgeable caseworkers, to help them access emergency food, shelter, and medical or mental health service.

Direct outcomes: Participants will increase income/benefits/housing stability and gain self-sufficiency.

Indirect outcomes: Increase in personal and public health/wellbeing; decrease in demand on public service from shelter and emergency services.

This project will (and has proved) enable clients to obtain stable housing and become self-sufficient through case management and connection with other community resources and supports.

ACC cares deeply about the people who are struggling in the community. It believes housing is the solution to homelessness. Its volunteer/intern-based workforce coupling with dedicated professional staff who provide them with support and supervision helps to stretch precious funding. With CDBG

funding, ACC would be able to continue to help the most vulnerable individuals and families in our community.



**Amherst
Community
Connections**

236 N Pleasant St. PO Box 141, Amherst MA 01004
(413) 345-0737

Housing is THE Solution to Homelessness

One-Stop Resource Center Program Budget--2019

Expenses

Personnel

Case manager & case worker	41,600
Payroll Taxes & Benefits	8,320
Total Personnel	49,920

Direct Program Costs

Program Support

Rent	6,000
Client Financial Assistance	1,000
Copying/Printing	500
Office Supplies/Phone/internet	1,000
Insurance Professional/Liability	1,000
Total Direct Program Costs	9,500

Total Program Costs	59,420
Overhead 12%	7,130
Total Expenses	66,550

Sources of Funding

Town of Amherst	50,000	Status Pending
ACC Contributions	16,550	Confirmed
Total Sources of Funding	66,550	



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Community
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(413) 345-0737

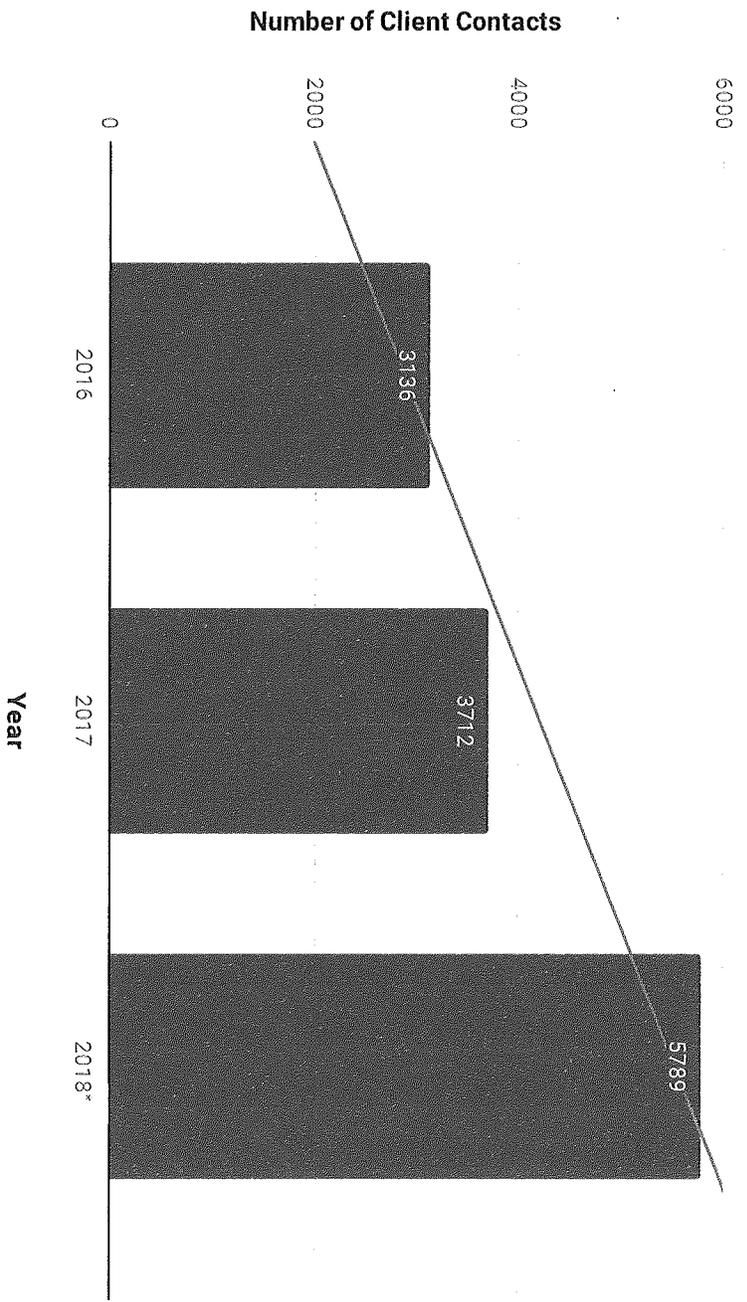
Housing is THE Solution to Homelessness

FY 2019 BUDGET—Amherst Community Connections

1. REVENUE	
a.) Appeals (Three times/year; Valley Gives online fundraising)	\$35,000
b.) Grant –CPA, Supportive Housing, Phase (I)	\$35,000
c.) Grant –CPA, Supportive Housing, Phase (II)	\$37,000
c.) Grant –CDBG, One-Stop Resource Center	\$40,000
TOTAL INCOME	\$147,000
2. EXPENDITURE	
a) Client financial assistance	\$2,500
b) Community relations	\$600
c) Copying/printing	\$1,000
d) Food/household/office	\$2,000
e) Phone	\$400
f) Postage	\$500
g) Fundraising expenses	\$3,000
h) Rent--office	\$12,000
i) Rent subsidies for Supportive Housing tenants	\$68,000
j) Insurances	\$2,000
k) Transportation	\$300
l) Internet	\$800
m) Wages	\$53,900
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$147,000

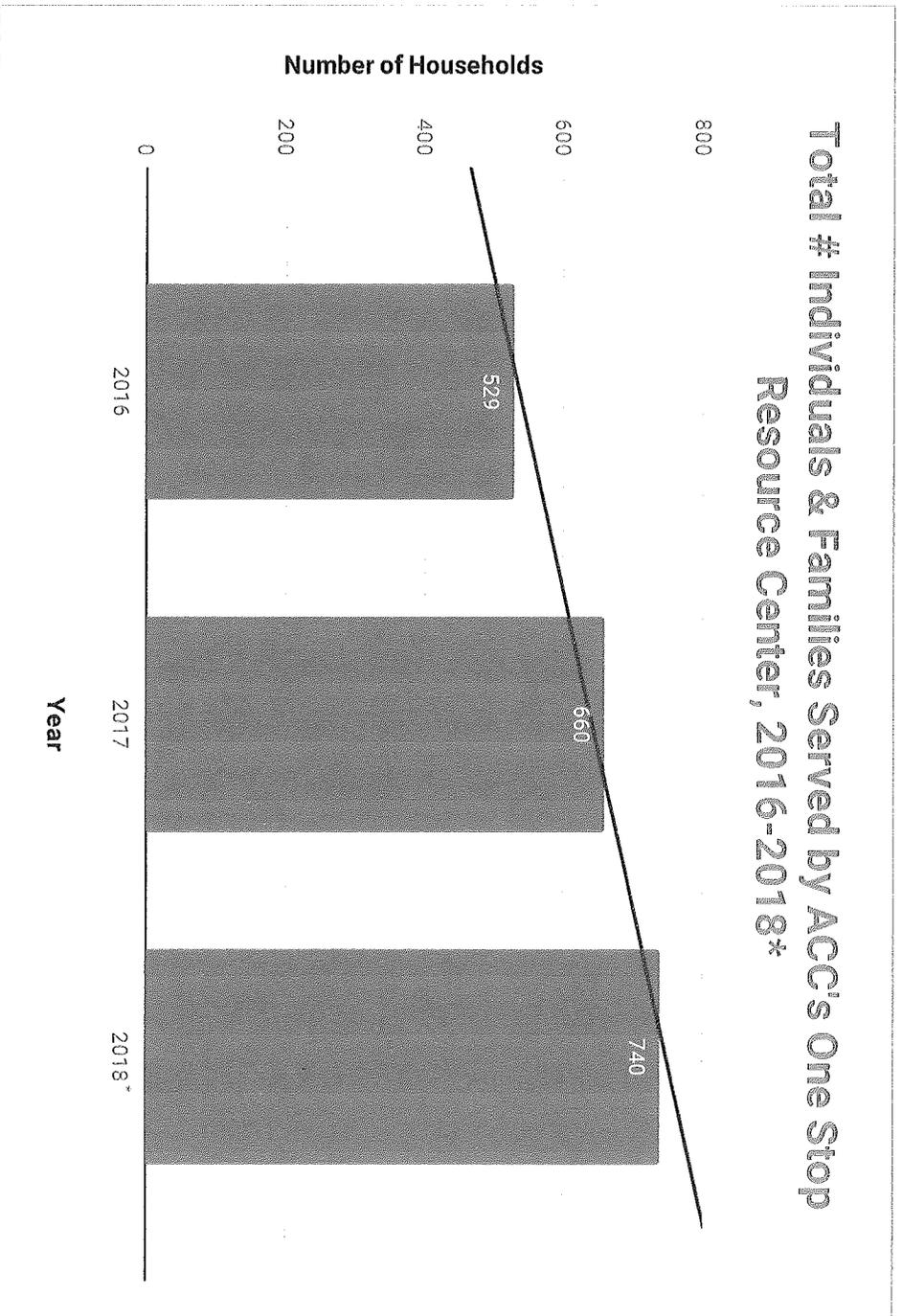
Number of Client Contacts

**Total Client Contacts with ACC's One Stop Resource Center,
2016-2018***



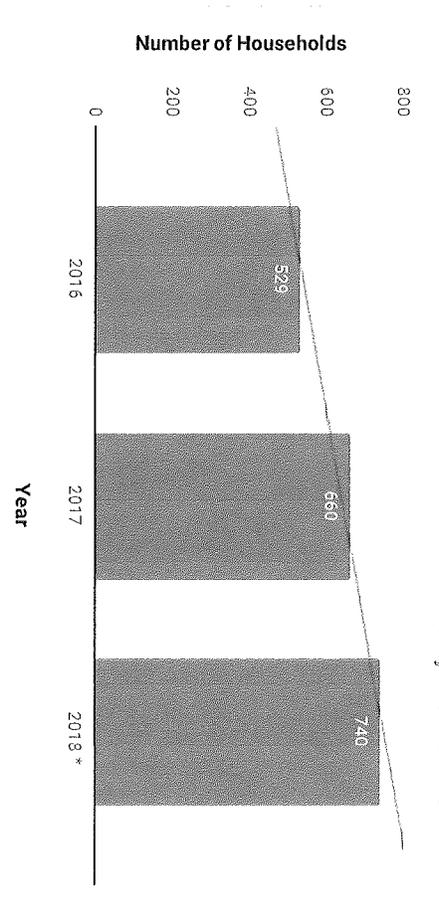
*December's # is an estimate.

Number of Households Served

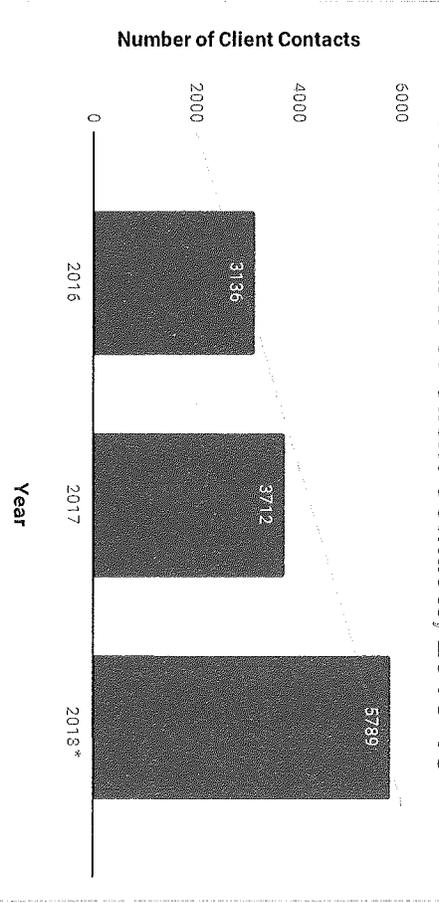


*December's # is an estimate

Total Number of Households Served, 2016-18*



Total Number of Client Contacts, 2016-18*



One-Stop Resource Center Clients, % Change

*the number for December 2018 is an estimate.

Year	Yearly Total Contacts	% Increase
2016	3136	
2017	3712	18.37%
2018*	5789	55.95%

Year	Number of Households	% Increase
2016	529	
2017	660	24.76%
2018*	740	12.12%



Eliot Community Human Services, Inc.

1 Prince Street, Northampton, MA 01060 413-587-6427

12/3/2018

Hwei-Ling Greeney
Executive Director
ACC

Dear CPA Committee and Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust,

Eliot CHS Homeless Services has provided its outreach services to homeless individuals in the Amherst area for many years. Its master-level clinicians provide mental health assessment, treatment, advocacy, benefit assistance, Department of Mental Health referrals, housing assistance and other support services to the adult homeless population. Outreach counselors are on the ground, identifying the most vulnerable individuals, collaborating with local social service agencies, and providing the transitional support to help individuals transition from the streets and shelter to permanent housing.

For the past seven years, Eliot CHS Homeless Services has worked with Amherst Community Connections to address homeless individuals' various needs. Over this time period, we have housed several individuals experiencing long-term homelessness through our collaborative efforts with Amherst Community Connections. In fact, we currently jointly serve 7 individuals throughout the Amherst area, which has already resulted in two successful housing placements.

On behalf of Eliot Homeless Services, I would like to offer support to Amherst Community Connections' CPA and CDBG grant applications this year. The grants will provide rental subsidies to the people who are homeless but have some limited financial means to obtain housing and at the same time to provide support service to them during their transition out of homelessness. This population faces many dire needs, especially stable housing and the need for accompanying supportive services.

We look forward to working with Amherst Community Connections on this project. We can provide outreach and housing stabilization services for our referrals in an effort to help homeless individuals transition to housing, while accessing the community resources and services that promote housing stability.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to call this regional manager at (413) 587-6427.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay S. Levy".

Jay S. Levy, LICSW
PATH Regional Manager
Eliot CHS Homeless Services



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Hampshire County*

OFFICE OF THE
SHERIFF



PATRICK J. CAHILLANE
SHERIFF

205 ROCKY HILL ROAD
NORTHAMPTON, MA 01061-7000
PHONE: (413) 582-7700
FAX: (413) 584-2695

November 29, 2018
Hampshire County Jail and House of Corrections
205 Rocky Hill Road
P.O. Box 7000
Northampton, MA 01061
Letter of Support for Amherst Community Corrections

To whom it may concern,

The mission of the Hampshire Sheriff's Office is to promote public safety by providing opportunities for successful reintegration for individuals sentenced to this facility. Our goal, to see each participant make a healthy transition back to the community, requires community support. This includes, however is not limited to, housing, employment and CORI education, and one-stop access to services in the community that provide assistance. Thus, the Hampshire Sheriff's Office is honored to collaborate with volunteer and community-based organizations such as Amherst Community Connections.

Since 2012, we have worked together. Our men have and continue to receive housing vouchers, housing search related services, CORI counseling and related assistance, along with numerous other supports. By helping inmates establish concrete release plans, supporting through and progressively implementing these plans, Amherst Community Connections concretely helps many men return to Amherst/Northampton.

Amherst Community Connections has brought grant funding support to our attention. It is important potential funding sources know of our strong support of their efforts.

Hampshire Sheriff's Office looks forward to continued collaboration with Amherst Community Connections. Please contact me at (413) 582-7720 or melinda.cady@hsd.state.ma.us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Melinda Cady

Assistant Deputy Superintendent; Director of Treatment and Reentry Services

JONES LIBRARY

NORTH AMHERST LIBRARY • MUNSON MEMORIAL LIBRARY

November 29, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is written in support of Amherst Community Connections (ACC), with whom the Jones Library has partnered since 2011 to provide assistance to library patrons who are in need. Each Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, an ACC staff member is available in our Community Room to provide information, referrals, and advocacy services. ACC's services include helping community members access affordable housing, employment, government benefits, transportation vouchers and other forms of assistance, along with providing information on local emergency resources, budgeting, and life skills.

The Jones Library strongly supports ACC's contributions to help library patrons and finds ACC's work highly compatible with the Jones Library's mission of providing resources to all people of all economic levels so that they may flourish and develop into lifelong learners.

Jones Library staff members take an interest in each library patron and refer persons who may be homeless to ACC staff. ACC has often guided and informed library staff members on how to approach and interact with homeless patrons, so that each person may receive support and the library environment can continue to serve as a safe, harmonious hub for everyone.

ACC's work continues to make a positive impact here at the Jones Library and throughout the Amherst community.

Please contact me at 413-259-3195 or berubem@joneslibrary.org if you have further questions.

Sincerely,



Matthew Berube
Head of Information Services
Jones Library

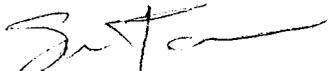
LEARN • DISCOVER • CONNECT

joneslibrary.org

November 14,2018

I support the work of Amherst Community Connections and would like to see it continue. It is an invaluable resource to the community in that it supports and guides people who may otherwise fall through the cracks. We all have hard times in our lives and it can be difficult to impossible to get back on track and get the help needed.

I am personally grateful for their generous assistance in directing me towards appropriate and affordable housing. They provided and helped me fill out applications, explained how different programs worked and provided all the supplies necessary to take the next step. I am struggling with a disability that has wreaked havoc on my life. Finding a healthy and affordable place to live has become an overwhelming challenge for me as my limitations have increased and my finances have decreased. The assistance provided by Amherst Community Connections has been a huge help. It has cleared much confusion and provided me with new hope and direction.


Susan Fama

Letter of support - Amherst Community Connections
RE: CDBG Grant Application

To members of the grant application review committee:

It is with great pleasure that I write a letter of support for Amherst Community Connections (ACC). ACC has been instrumental in moving my brother, Ken, from homelessness to apartment living with the services he needs to be stable. This one – two year process required incredible patience, professional skill and an on-going commitment to the most disenfranchised among us.

Ken, 58 years old, has been homeless off and on for the last 10-15 years. He is a late stage alcoholic, malnourished with on-going mental health issues. He has little short-term memory and lives under the illusion that he is just having a bad spell but will eventually get back on his feet without help. With these disabilities Ken was slowly dying on a park bench. There was little likelihood that he would live through another New England winter.

The staff at ACC reached out to Ken on a regular basis at Jones Library. They talked about books, his favorite author and became a presence with which Ken was at ease. Steadily, staff developed a relationship with him and continued to offer him services. Though Ken regularly spoke with the staff, he was not able to follow through with referrals or proactively take steps to make improvements in any area of his life.

In the summer of 2018 I received a call from ACC regarding their concern for Ken. We had met on one of my previous visits to my brother. They let me know that Ken was not doing well and that he was in great need of housing and health services. They developed a plan with me that would allow Ken to accept housing while maintaining his self-respect and autonomy. Staff negotiated with an apartment management group for a one-bedroom apartment, assumed responsibility for executing paperwork and maintained contact with Ken until the apartment became available and furnishings and goods were delivered. Once in the apartment, they arranged in-home medical care, signed-up Ken for MassHealth and helped him to adjust to life in an apartment. Ken trusts the staff at ACC and is willing to work with them.

My brother is happier and more stable than he has been in years. He is gaining weight and expresses gratitude for everything that has been done for him. He has made it clear he will continue to work with ACC. Though Ken will always be disabled in some way, the help from ACC is allowing Ken to begin healing and he is increasing his chances of eventually rejoining and contributing in some way to the community. The staff at ACC is restoring hope to Ken and those of us who love him.

With sincerest appreciation,



Cynthia Goodwin
3308 25th Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98144

Amherst Community Connections--Board of Directors and Officers, 2019

1. Patricia Creaser

Board Role: President

Affiliations: Retired human service worker; member of Newman Catholic Center, Amherst

Residence: Sunderland

Phone: 413-687-5521

2. David Barnett

Board Role: Clerk

Affiliations: Retired engineer; member of South Congregational Church, Amherst

Residence: Belchertown

Phone: 413-459-7499

3. Josh Berins

Board Role: Treasurer

Affiliations: Small business owner; consumer advocate

Residence: Amherst

Phone: 413-345-1481

4. Bella Holstead

Board Role: Member

Affiliations: Educator; artist; member of Markham-Nathan Fund for Social Justice,
Northampton

Residence: Amherst

Phone: 413-256-6454; 413-687-2204

5. Hwei-Ling Greeney

Board Role: Ex-officio

Affiliations: Founder/executive director, Amherst Community Connections

Residence: Amherst

Phone: 413-253-4882

AMHERST COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

