

TAKING Root

Reflecting on the Virginia Beach
Housing Resource Center's
First Five Years (2018 – 2023)



Housing Resource Center Management and Service Coordination

Virginia Beach Housing & Neighborhood Preservation (VBHNP)
Homeless Services Division

Housing Resource Center Providers

Mainstream Services: Virginia Beach Human Services

Singles Shelter: Judeo-Christian Outreach Center (JCOC)

Family Shelter: Samaritan House (2018 – 2021) and
VBHNP Homeless Services (2021 – Current)

Permanent Housing: Virginia Supportive Housing

Day Services: JCOC

Health Center: Southeastern Virginia Health System

Dining Hall: Culinary Services Group

Building Maintenance: ABM

Security: Dunbar Security Solutions (2018 – 2023) and Allied Universal (2023 – Current)

Acknowledgements

The Housing Resource Center would not have been possible without the unwavering commitment of the Virginia Beach City Council and City leadership to approve, fund and support the project from its development to the ongoing work of our dedicated team of staff, service providers and volunteers.

Our sincerest thanks to the BEACH Community Partnership and its Governing Board, VB Home Now foundation and all the faith and nonprofit organizations who continue to be valuable partners in the community effort to make homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring in Virginia Beach.

Key Moments of HRC Growth

1980s Faith organizations, a nonprofit agency and the City partner to establish the Emergency Winter Shelter program.

2011 An expanded day services center is proposed; site search is conducted.

2012 City Council approves purchase of Witchduck Road site.

1997 The Lighthouse Center on 18th Street at the Oceanfront opens as a day services center and gathering place for the Emergency Winter Shelter program.

2013 City Council approves design funding for center.

2014 Public design charette is held.



From Little Acorns Grow Mighty Oaks



RUTH HILL

The Housing Resource Center (HRC) may have officially opened for services five years ago, but the seeds of this one-of-a-kind facility were planted approximately 40 years ago when the faith community first advocated for an emergency homeless shelter in Virginia Beach. We owe a debt of gratitude to many of these same advocates who were a part of the journey to bring the HRC to fruition and continue to be steadfast partners in our effort to preventing and ending homelessness in Virginia Beach. Our partnership with the faith community for our annual Winter Shelter program stemmed from that initial effort and continues today, providing unsheltered individuals in Virginia Beach with a warm place to sleep each night at churches throughout the city between November and March.

It is fitting that the traditional theme for the five-year anniversary is wood. In its short five years, the HRC has become the fixture in the community where people go to find shelter, protection, stability –

the same qualities that a strong, sturdy tree shares, which is why the tree was chosen to represent the building.

More than 1,200 adults and children have been provided shelter at the HRC. The 29 efficiency apartments increased our capacity to permanently house those who are ready to leave homelessness behind, including several residents who have lived at the HRC since day one.

To ensure that our limited housing and shelter options could be prioritized for the most vulnerable in our community, a more comprehensive approach was created to preventing homelessness and diverting people away from the service system when possible. Those who are literally homeless or at risk of losing their housing are now connected to short-term financial assistance, help with locating housing, family and landlord mediation or other alternative housing.

Our ability to adapt quickly enabled us to remain resilient and weather the storm of the COVID-19 pandemic. Within four days of the emergency declaration, we launched a non-congregate shelter

continued

2015 Draft final design is presented to public. City Council approves construction funding, rezoning and use permit.



2018 Housing Resource Center opens for services.



2016 Groundbreaking ceremony and start of construction.



2017B Home Now is incorporated to support programs at the HRC and in the community.



2023 City Council approves FY24 budget which includes expansion of singles shelter. Singles shelter expansion is underway and expected to be completed and operating by February 2024.





Mighty Oaks *continued*

program to provide protection for the most vulnerable individuals living on the streets and to accommodate social distancing in our singles shelter -- the first in the region to do so. When the City received more than \$2 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) funds for housing and homelessness-related issues caused by the pandemic, Homeless Services designed a completely new Eviction Prevention Assistance program for low- to moderate-income renters who were experiencing financial hardship. Before the program was transferred to a regional provider, our team provided \$300,000 in assistance to 125 eligible households to help keep them stably housed.

The HRC has given new life to our service system, transforming the way we coordinate, integrate and streamline resources through a “one-stop shop, no-wrong-door” approach. It’s become the place where new and existing partnerships are cultivated.

Homeless Outreach and Peer Recovery/Mental Health staff partnered to enhance outreach to unsheltered individuals struggling with mental health and substance abuse challenges.

Hundreds of volunteers and a variety of partners joined our community effort, sharing their time and talents. From greeting guests to developing and managing the mail system for day services participants to serving holiday meals and brightening the family shelter space with fresh paint and uplifting messages.

While the HRC’s first five years highlight our progress towards our mission and are reasons to celebrate, I would be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge the challenges that compel us to keep reaching higher. The need for affordable housing, especially for the populations we serve. The increased visibility of encampments. The barriers to housing that mental health and substance use issues create.

And yet, I am encouraged for the future of the HRC. Through the ongoing support of our City Council and City leadership, like the expansion of the HRC singles shelter and contribution of \$3 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds toward new emergency housing vouchers, and the dedication of all our partners who carry out this difficult, but important work, the HRC’s impact will only continue to grow and reach farther and wider.

I would especially like to thank the staff, our providers and volunteers at the HRC. This report offers just a small glimpse of your compassion and tireless efforts in helping to transform lives every day.

Together, we can all reflect on these significant accomplishments achieved during these past five years and renew our community’s commitment to making homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring in Virginia Beach.

RUTH HILL





A Place Where People Can Thrive

The Housing Resource Center (HRC) is a one-stop shop of services for families and individuals experiencing homelessness or a housing crisis. When the HRC opened in 2018, it became the first facility of its kind in South Hampton Roads to integrate and co-locate shelter, housing and ancillary homeless support services in one building:



Permanent Housing

29 one-bedroom efficiency apartments

Family Shelter

10 motel-style rooms (40 beds)

Singles Shelter

55 beds

Day Services

Showers, laundry, mail and housing support for adults experiencing unsheltered homelessness

Homeless Services

Triage, assessment, homelessness prevention, diversion, referrals to shelter and housing, case management and outreach.



Human Services

Financial assistance, Child Welfare Prevention, Employment Services, Behavioral Health, Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness

Health Center

Comprehensive primary care health services for adults and children, health education, nutrition counseling, medication assistance and laboratory services

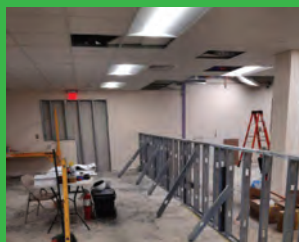
Dining Hall

Meals provided to HRC shelter and day services participants only



CONTINUING TO GROW

The City Council approved the FY24 budget, which includes funds for the expansion of the single shelter by 32 beds. The additional beds are expected to be available in early 2024.



Making connections to help

PUT DOWN

Roots

The Housing Resource Center (HRC) is one of the primary access points for people experiencing homelessness or a housing crisis to connect with our community service system.

Providers work together to identify the resources a family or individual needs to help them achieve the best possible outcome for their situation, no matter which door they enter through at the HRC. This means an unsheltered individual participating in day services can be assessed and referred for primary care services at the health center.

Or a family in need of prevention services can be connected to Human Services on the third floor for childcare or food assistance. If a household needs other resources that are not offered at the HRC, such as food pantries or clothing closets, they are directed to our many community partners for assistance.

The HRC is also the central referral source for housing placement programs provided by our Continuum of Care nonprofit service providers.

When someone arrives at the HRC, they are taking that first important step on their journey to making positive changes in their life.



FIVE YEARS

Sept. 24, 2018 – Sept. 23, 2023

Service Outcomes

Coordinated entry triaged and assessed **9,595** referrals from the Regional Housing Crisis Hotline and **2,475** HRC walk-ins for homeless services.

53 individuals were connected to permanent housing in the BEACH Community Apartments at the HRC.

829 adults were provided shelter in the singles shelter at the HRC.



2,204 unsheltered adults accessed day services.

5,304 individuals connected to public assistance.

1,885 individuals connected to Employment Services.





1,427 individuals connected to Behavioral Health Services.

368 homeless households were diverted from the service system to alternative housing opportunities.

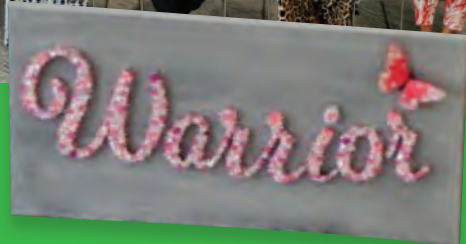


438 individuals (adults and children) were provided shelter in the family shelter at the HRC.

2,288 households were prevented from becoming homeless.

Homeless Outreach conducted **2,990** engagements with individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

Approximately **140,349** meals were served to shelter and day services participants.



3,944 patients in the community were served at the health center.



Branching Out

The Housing Resource Center (HRC) has become the centerpiece of our community system where new and existing partnerships can grow. It provides a space where nonprofits, businesses, faith-based organizations and other agencies whose values align with our mission can connect with our most vulnerable neighbors and offer their programs directly on site.

The creation of the robust volunteer program at the HRC expanded opportunities for the community to get involved. HRC ambassadors provided quality customer service by extending a warm welcome to visitors and residents and guiding them throughout the facility. Day services and dining hall attendants continue to fill gaps in program support and enhance service delivery for sheltered and unsheltered guests.

Participants received vision and hearing screenings from the Lions Club Mobile Sight and Hearing Unit and free haircuts from Legacy Barber Academy students who wanted to sharpen their skills. LIFT Fitness Foundation offered fitness and nutrition programs to help participants boost their confidence and sense of empowerment. Virginia Beach City Public Schools' after-school program provided tutors for children residing in the family shelter. Volunteers in the Faith in Action Office engaged with clients and coordinated resources like food pantries, clothing closets and financial assistance provided by churches.

Longtime partners at the HRC included DMV, Legal Aid and United Way who provided ID assistance, legal services and financial literacy classes, respectively.

Other community engagement opportunities during the HRC's first five years included building tours, Project Homeless Connect, VB Home Now donation drives and holiday meal services.



818
VOLUNTEERS



15,200
HOURS

818 volunteers contributed more than 15,200 hours to directly provide or support services at the HRC.



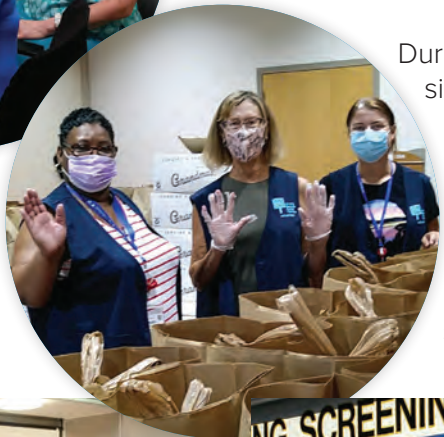
In June 2023, **82 individuals with lived experience** at the HRC participated in a **Food and Feedback Forum** to share their input on strategies to improve programs and services.



The **Faith in Action** Office manages the Charity Tracker database to coordinate community resources provided by faith-based organizations, such as financial assistance for rent, utilities and emergency housing; transportation; furniture; clothing and meals. Since September 2018, 7,340 households were assisted in Charity Tracker.



Volunteer **Jennifer K. Vaughan** was selected for the 2022 Points of Light Inspiration Honor Roll in recognition of her dedicated service at the HRC. She was involved in the early planning of the HRC and is the backbone of the volunteer program here, having contributed more than 3,000 hours of service since the building opened. As a day services attendant, she facilitates the shower and laundry schedule and assists the Faith in Action Office with managing the Charity Tracker database that connects houses of worship to needs in the community.



During the **COVID-19 pandemic**, some singles shelter beds at the HRC shifted to non-congregate shelter to allow for social distancing. Even though direct, onsite volunteer services were put on hold during this time, individuals continued to help by packaging the food that would be delivered to the participants who were sheltered offsite.



BRUSHWORKS



In the summer of 2021, Cultural Affairs and Housing & Neighborhood Preservation partnered on the pilot arts employment program, Brushworks. Three HRC single shelter and apartment residents were selected to collaborate with professional artist, Nadd Harvin, in designing and installing shipping container murals near the facility with the theme “Community of One.” Candidates who expressed interest in the employment opportunity were also connected to resources to improve their job readiness, such as applying and interviewing for jobs. Brushworks was made possible through a grant from the VB Home Now foundation and the generosity of their supporters, including TowneBank, Ferguson Cares, and IKEA.







**Housing &
Neighborhood
Preservation**



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