



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BENTON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION HONORS SAFEPLACE

CORVALLIS, Oregon – SafePlace, the Unity Shelter program that offers transitional shelter, case management and other services to people in the mid-valley who are homeless, has received an award from the Benton Community Foundation for innovation.

SafePlace won the foundation’s 2021 award for outstanding innovative project or program. The award recognizes exceptional innovation and creativity in a recent charitable project. Innovation may be in terms of design, public involvement, or overall impact.

The award was announced Friday at the foundation’s third annual awards luncheon. Previous winners of this award include The Power of 100 People Who Care and the Benton Habitat for Humanity Home Repair Initiative.

The Rev. Jennifer Butler, senior minister at First Congregational United Church of Christ, accepted the award on behalf of SafePlace. The Safe Camp facility on the grounds of the church is part of the SafePlace program.

SafePlace houses 28 people in four locations in microshelters – small structures about the size of a garden shed that can sleep an individual, a couple or a single parent with small children. The structures have electric heat and locking doors. Residents in SafePlace also have access to case-management services designed to help them move into more permanent shelter.

Since Safe Camp began in the summer of 2019, it has become part of the SafePlace program, which has placed additional microshelters at locations such as the Corvallis Evangelical Church and the Room at the Inn shelter for women at First United Methodist Church. Construction is scheduled to begin Monday on additional microshelters at the Episcopal Church of the Good Samaritan.

SafePlace is one of the programs under the umbrella of Unity Shelter, a Corvallis nonprofit organization that provides fiscal and operational leadership and management. The Unity Shelter mission is to provide safe shelter through collaborative care.

In a video presentation about the award, Butler thanked the Benton Community Foundation and added: “Every day, I am thinking about all of the volunteers, the Steering Committee members, the board of directors from Unity Shelter, who we’ve worked with to make this a possibility, all of the volunteers who’ve helped build microshelters. I think about how much work and how much good-heartedness they’ve put into the effort, and I wonder if they understand how valuable they are.”

Said Shawn Collins, the executive director of Unity Shelter: “SafePlace provides a crucial and much-needed step on the path to housing, allowing people the stability they need to recover, restore confidence and health, and focus on next steps. So many who come through the program have addressed long-deferred health issues, returned to work, and found the support and acceptance they need. I’m proud of the work of Rev. Butler and the entire team of volunteers and staff who have made this possible, and whose dedication to help those experiencing homelessness has only gotten stronger as the program has grown.”

More information about the awards – and the video presentation – can be found at the Benton Community Foundation’s website, <https://www.bcfgives.org/awards/>. More information about Unity Shelter and its programs, along with information about how to donate, can be found at the website unityshelter.org.