



**ILLINOIS HOUSING
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

Pat Quinn, Governor

News

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****MEDIA OPPORTUNITY****

State Helps Create Homes, Support Services for Homeless Veterans in E. St. Louis

New Development Set to Open Will Help Vets Achieve Stability

EAST ST. LOUIS – This Veterans Day as Illinois honors service members for their patriotism and sacrifices, new state-funded housing for homeless Veterans is preparing to open in East St. Louis. On Friday, November 13, a grand opening is scheduled at 11 a.m. to celebrate the new development during a week when Veterans will be honored for their service. The Joseph Center will provide homes for 26 Veterans, creating the first long-term housing for homeless Veterans in Southern Illinois. Residents will receive 24-hour care, life skills, health services and job training for up to two years.

The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) invested more than \$900,000 to help nonprofit developer, Eagle's Nest of St. Clair County, transform a brick building at 5020 State St. in East St. Louis into a place Veterans can call home while they receive the skills and care they need to achieve stability. The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs provided a \$168,000 grant, and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity gave a \$59,600 grant.

"Veterans who have served our nation deserve to have access to safe, decent housing," said Gloria L. Materre, IHDA Executive Director. "The Joseph Center demonstrates Governor Pat Quinn's commitment to taking care of our Veterans by providing critical services so they are not forgotten heroes."

A disproportionate number of Veterans are homeless. About one out of every three homeless men is a Veteran. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, an estimated 131,000 Veterans are homeless any given night, including approximately 20,000 in Illinois.

The Joseph Center has been a labor of love for Martha Watts, who says divine inspiration led her to start planning for the home. For 20 years, Watts worked with homeless Veterans as a clinical nurse specialist healthcare at the St. Louis VA Medical Center. She listened to their continued concern that they needed a supportive setting to live following rehab as they worked to overcome their substance abuse problems. One day, she heard a voice saying, "You can help." Soon after, Watts began planning for the home that would carry her late husband's name, The Joseph Center.

Porter W. Thompson, a 75-year-old Army Veteran, recalls first meeting Watts in the 1980s as a patient struggling with an alcohol addiction in the St. Louis VA hospital where she worked. She helped place him in a long-term home in Iowa, similar to Joseph Center, where he received the help he needed to stop drinking, get a new job and start a new life.

“With long-term care, I was able to get back on track with my life,” Thompson said. “Long-term care is really the only way I know that can return you to a stable life.”

All Veterans entering the program must come directly from a substance abuse treatment program. While living at Joseph Center, a case manager will be assigned to work with the Veteran to develop an individual plan. As residents, Veterans will receive the following services:

- Life skills
- Medical, dental, and mental health services
- Career counseling
- Job training and employment
- Post-rehab substance abuse care
- Individual and group counseling

****Pre-event interview opportunities available. Please contact Rebecca Boykin at (312) 836-5343. ****

About the Illinois Housing Development Authority

IHDA (www.ihda.org) is a self-supporting state agency that finances the creation and the preservation of affordable housing across Illinois. Since its creation in 1967, IHDA has allocated more than \$9.67 billion and financed more than 204,000 affordable units across the state. IHDA accomplishes its mission through a number of federal and state funding sources including the Illinois Affordable Housing Trust Fund, the Illinois Affordable Housing Tax Credits Fund, the allocation of federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits, and HOME Investment Partnership funds. IHDA is also a bonding authority, and independently sells bonds, based on its own good credit, to finance affordable housing in Illinois.