



Responding to the Needs of the Community

## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### Homeless Coalition Awarded \$1.2 Million from State of Florida *Challenge and Homeless Housing Assistance Grants monies to provide needed services*

TAMPA, Fla. – (Tuesday, September 26, 2006) – Officials at the Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County announced today they have been awarded \$1.2 million by the Florida Department of Children and Families to be used to increase the community's capacity to meet the needs of homeless men, women and children. Through two statewide grant programs, the Challenge Grant and Homeless Housing Assistance Grant, the funding received by the Coalition represents a 34 percent increase over last year's awards.

“The grant funding we've received is targeted to increase our community's ability to meet the needs of homeless and near homeless individuals and families,” said Rayme L. Nuckles, CEO of the Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County.

Through the Homeless Housing Assistance Grant program (HHA), which provides funding to assist community's in building transitional and permanent housing for homeless people, two Hillsborough County proposals were selected – an expansion project by DACCO and a new initiative by the Tampa Metropolitan Area YMCA. DACCO will utilize its \$750,000 award to offset the construction cost of a women's transitional center that is part of their larger new campus set to break ground in January 2007. The Tampa Metro YMCA will receive \$360,178 to implement a new transitional housing program for youth who have aged out of foster care system. Youth aging out of foster care often lack the support and services needed to be self-sufficient. In fact, 25 to 33 percent become homeless within three years of leaving foster care.

“This year marks the first time more than one project in a community could receive funding through the Homeless Housing Assistance grant program,” said Nuckles. “We are thankful to the Florida Legislature who during the 2006 legislative session included a \$2 million increase for HHA program for the 06-07 budget year.”

The Challenge Grant program funding is dedicated to helping community’s increase supportive services and assistance. This year, the Coalition will receive \$100,000 and will use the funding to: 1) help chronically homeless individuals and families move from transitional shelter to permanent housing, 2) prevent homelessness through on-time financial assistance and 3) help homeless people become employment ready.”

For example, once a homeless person or family is stabilized in transitional housing, the next step is to move to permanent housing. However often the up-front costs associated with moving creates a barrier that keeps them in transitional housing longer than needed. Therefore, with a little financial assistance to overcome this barrier, individuals and families move to permanent housing faster – minimizing the overall cost needed to end the episode of homelessness and frees up space for more people to get help. Funding will be used to help prevent people from becoming homeless with one-time rent, mortgage and utility assistance aimed to help overcome normally temporary set backs that are responsible for sending low-income households spiraling towards homelessness.

Finally, funding will be used to help people be ‘job ready’ by providing transportation assistance to job readiness programs and interviews, assistance with purchasing professional clothing or uniforms needed for employment and short-term child care assistance on a limited basis.

“These are all areas that local providers have identified as gaps in service needed by their clients to become engaged and productive residents of our community,” said Nuckles.

The Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County is a 501 (C) 3 organization responsible for establishing and maintaining concentrated strategic efforts to develop long-term constructive solutions that address the underlying causes of homelessness and meet the immediate needs of homeless people. Governed by coalition members, the Coalition promotes collaboration and coordination among social service providers, businesses, funding institutions, housing providers, state and federal agencies, faith-based communities and other supportive organizations and individuals to organize and deliver, without duplication, support services, emergency shelters, transitional housing and affordable housing to meet the specific needs of all homeless people. The Coalition also operates the UNITY Information Network that “virtually” links service providers in Hillsborough County. UNITY offers integrated referrals, creates a base of data to better understand homelessness to plan effective intervention, and shows “real-time” availability of services – all essential to securing funding to meet the level of need within the community. For more information visit [www.homelessofhc.org](http://www.homelessofhc.org).

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