

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***iCare recognizes Guest House
for providing housing to those homeless and at-risk of becoming homeless***

Milwaukee, November 6, 2020 – Independent Care Health Plan (iCare) awarded a commemorative plaque and a financial donation to Guest House of Milwaukee.



Left to right: Cindy Krahenbuhl, Lisa Brooks, Tunisia Sims, Sharise Hollingsworth and Tom Lutzow attended when Guest House accepted a plaque from iCare.

The inscription reads: In appreciation and thanks to Tunisia Sims and Guest House for your partnership and commitment to serving our members.

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“Health disparities pose serious problems for many Milwaukee residents – some *iCare* members included,” said Tom Lutzow, *iCare* President and CEO. “Guest House has really gone above and beyond in the way they work with us and for our members. The pandemic presents new challenges for community-based organizations like Guest House, so we wanted to recognize them and offer our support. They’ve created unique programs to stabilize people’s housing situations through rent and security deposit assistance, and they keep making their programs better.”

Health disparities refers to a higher burden of illness, injury, disability, or mortality experienced by one group relative to another. Disparities occur across many dimensions, including race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, location, gender, disability status, and sexual orientation. Disparities are often tied to social determinants of health including:

- Economic stability
- Neighborhood and physical environment
- Education
- Food
- Community and social context
- Health care system

Homelessness is an example of an issue categorized under “Neighborhood and physical environment”. *iCare* has been a leader in addressing not only the medical causes of health conditions, but also the social determinants.

“We’re an agency that feels quality is of the utmost importance. The way in which we deliver services is very focused on the clients we serve,” said Cindy Krahenbuhl, Executive Director of Guest House. “All of our staff are trained in trauma-informed care and we offer a full array of services for people who’ve either been homeless, are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless.”

“We follow a ‘refer and continue’ model at *iCare*,” said *iCare* Health Coach/Housing Navigator, Lisa Brooks. “We hear too many stories of people being referred and forgotten. It’s been great working with Tunisia Sims and Guest House. I’m glad to assist with preparing the documentation to match what they need, because it keeps a roof over my members’ heads.” Brooks has been instrumental in *iCare*’s Homelessness and At Risk for Eviction programs. So far, *iCare* has assisted 79 members with critical housing needs since Brooks assumed the Housing Navigator role in April, 2020.

Guest House has faced and overcome challenges posed by the pandemic. “As an essential service, with some operations requiring employees on site 24/7, staffing was a challenge in the beginning. Getting needed personal protective equipment was also a challenge,” said Krahenbuhl. “Our prevention program for those at risk of becoming homeless relies on face-to-face contact. Both landlords and renters were initially uncomfortable. And while eviction restrictions are a good thing, another consequence is that the supply of available housing became quite scarce.”

About the Guest House Homelessness Prevention Program

The Guest House Homelessness Prevention Program targets individuals who are “At Risk” of homelessness. Individuals cannot be “homeless” to qualify for this program (including staying at a shelter, sleeping outside, or sleeping in a car). Some individuals might be staying with friends temporarily, staying with family temporarily, or be on the verge of eviction from a house or apartment. Some individuals might be leaving a jail/prison or a system of care, while others might be living in a hotel or motel.

Whatever the reason for their ‘At Risk’ status, the program attempts to stabilize their housing situation through short-term case management and referrals to other community resources. The goal is to reach as many individuals as possible, provide efficient and effective service, and allow the individual to continue moving forward on their own. On average individuals require three months of service. Some individuals may qualify for one month rental assistance and/or security deposit assistance, while

others may not (rental and security deposit assistance are dependent on funding). Each individual develops a Housing Stabilization Plan with the Community Outreach Case Manager, which acts as a guide for services to stabilize long-term housing.

Guest House is also in the early stages of developing a program to assist people with back rent.

About Guest House

Located on North 13th Street between Juneau and McKinley Avenues in the King Park neighborhood, Guest House of Milwaukee is the largest publicly-funded homeless shelter in the city and has been leading the community in ending the cycle of poverty in their clients' lives for nearly forty years. Guest House serves over 1,200 individuals and families on an annual basis, and has a proven track record of assisting even those with the most severe challenges to overcoming homelessness regain and maintain their independence, including: mental illness, addiction, physical and cognitive disabilities, and history with the criminal justice system. For more information, contact Amy Rowell at amy@guesthouseofmilwaukee.org or 414-316-2012.

About Independent Care Health Plan (iCare)

iCare provides managed care coverage for approximately 40,000 people throughout Wisconsin, most of whom have low incomes or are disabled. iCare has been securing the wellness of people with complex conditions for over two decades. Programs include [Follow to Home and Follow to Home for Homeless](#). For more information about iCare, visit www.iCareHealthPlan.org, visit iCare on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [YouTube](#) or call 800-777-4376 (TTY 1-800-947-3529).

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