



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Winter Shelter to Open Every Night
For Individuals Who Are Experiencing Homelessness**
*Shelter to help even more people in need by opening
November 15, 2017 through March 15, 2018, 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., regardless of weather
and March 16 through March 31, 2018, 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., during extreme weather*

PITTSBURGH (November 9, 2017) – [Allegheny County Department of Human Services](#) and [Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net](#)® are pleased to announce that the Winter Shelter for individuals who are experiencing homelessness will open every night regardless of the weather. When the Winter Shelter opens at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, November 15, 2017, it will remain open from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. every night through March 15, 2018. In addition, between March 16 and March 31, 2018, the Winter Shelter will open on nights of extreme weather, 25°F or below, when the wind chill factor is below 15°F, or when there is a 50 percent or greater chance of freezing precipitation.

The men's Winter Shelter will again be located at the [Smithfield United Church of Christ](#) at 620 Smithfield Street, Downtown. The women's Winter Shelter will be at a separate location in Uptown Pittsburgh this year. The location of the women's shelter is made known only to persons served and health and human service providers.

"Between November 15, 2016 and March 31, 2017, the Winter Shelter opened 135 nights," stated [Brian Matous](#), Winter Shelter team leader for Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net, an innovative, award-winning Pittsburgh Mercy outreach program to people who are experiencing homelessness. "Last winter, we assisted more than 1,000 individuals at the shelter. The average nightly census was 92 men and 50 women."

According to Matous, "Individuals who present to the Winter Shelter are usually those who are often in the most need of the following services: showers, hot meals, laundry services, and a warm place to sleep; homeless diversion; housing ready services (for those experiencing chronic homelessness); service coordination and case management services; basic medical care with options to begin primary care; veterans services; and benefits coordination. We work in tandem with the [Allegheny Link](#).

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MARC CHERNA, DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES – OFFICE OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS
101 HUMAN SERVICES BUILDING • ONE SMITHFIELD STREET • PITTSBURGH, PA 15222



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“Many of the individuals we serve at the shelter have multiple, complex needs.” Matous said. “Our main goal, besides being a place for folks experiencing homelessness to get in and out of the elements, is to get a full understanding of why someone is struggling. If we uncover that someone is coming to us because they do not have power, heat, or water, then we’d rather divert someone from entering into a homeless status. We may not have the financial means to help everyone, which is why we work in conjunction with coordinated intake through the Allegheny Link, and several other agencies and providers in the county. We’re a judgment-free service that wants to focus mainly on helping individuals grow out of their homeless struggles. Being homeless is not necessarily an indication that someone just doesn’t have money to be housed. It’s a complex state of being that usually only happens when several support systems and personal health factors have broken down. We want our shelter to be the place that someone can take that first step at becoming their better, and eventually, their best selves.”

[Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank](#) is seeking member agencies to donate time, food, and/or resources to the Winter Shelter. Volunteers are needed to prepare hearty meals for up to 150 individuals. Meals must be hot and must consist of a starch, a vegetable, and a protein. Member agencies who volunteer to prepare meals for the Winter Shelter may order food from the Food Bank’s inventory at no cost. Member agencies who are interested in volunteering to prepare meals are asked to contact their agency network coordinator for additional details and to schedule dates that are convenient to their organization.

Organizations, corporations, and individuals who do not have the capacity to prepare meals are encouraged to consider donating money toward the cost – or to cover the cost – of purchasing a balanced, hot meal for 150 individuals. Monetary donations may be made via Pittsburgh Mercy’s website, www.pittsburghmercy.org; mailed to Pittsburgh Mercy, Development Office, 101 Bradford Rd., Wexford, PA 15090; or by contacting [Connie Murray](#), director of Development at Pittsburgh Mercy, at CMurray@pittsburghmercy.org or 724-934-3537. Do not mail cash. Please designate the gift for the Winter Shelter.

In-kind donations of new hats, scarves, gloves, socks, boots, winter coats, toiletries, and personal hygiene items for distribution to participants at the Winter Shelter are also greatly appreciated. For logistical reasons, the Winter Shelter accepts donations only by appointment. To schedule an appointment, please email operationsafety@pittsburghmercy.org or call 412-232-5739. Please place “Winter Shelter In-Kind Donation” in the subject heading line. Messages are returned within 24-48 business hours.

If you would like to volunteer your time or offer your services, please contact Brian Matous at 412-689-6565.

Funding for the Winter Shelter is made possible by the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Pittsburgh Mercy’s Operation Safety Net, an Allegheny County Economic Development Emergency Solutions Grant, Trinity Health, and Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Winter Shelter organizers also acknowledge the contributions of Smithfield United Church of Christ, the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, Catholic Men’s Fellowship, Shepherd’s Heart Fellowship, and countless volunteers, providers, funders, and donors without whose collaboration and support the shelter would not be possible.

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About Allegheny County Department of Human Services

[Allegheny County Department of Human Services](#) is responsible for providing and administering publicly-funded human services to Allegheny County residents. DHS is dedicated to meeting these human services needs, most particularly for the county's most vulnerable populations, through an extensive range of information exchange, prevention, early intervention, case management, crisis intervention, and after-care services.

About Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net®

[Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net®](#) is an award-winning, innovative medical and social service outreach program for the unsheltered homeless population in Allegheny County. It strives to address the circumstances which undermine the behavioral and physical health of persons served by creating avenues for people who are homeless to access the medical and social services that are necessary for them to improve their quality of life. Since its founding in 1992, Operation Safety Net has reached approximately 10,000 homeless individuals with more than 68,000 visits where they live – in camps along riverbanks, in alleyways, or beneath bridges and highway overpasses – and has successfully helped more than 1,400 individuals who were once homeless to find homes of their own. In doing so, Operation Safety Net not only assists with providing health care and affordable housing, but also offers this vulnerable population hope, dignity, and a sense of community. Operation Safety Net is part of Pittsburgh Mercy and Trinity Health, serving in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy. To learn more or to make a donation in support of Operation Safety Net's important work in the community, visit www.pittsburghmercy.org.

About Pittsburgh Mercy

[Pittsburgh Mercy](#), a member of [Trinity Health](#), serving in the tradition of the [Sisters of Mercy](#), is a person-centered, trauma-informed, population-based health and social service nonprofit organization engaged in working with people and families in our community. Pittsburgh Mercy is one of the largest employers and the only Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Pittsburgh Mercy includes Bethlehem Haven, McAuley Ministries, Mercy Behavioral Health, Mercy Community Health, Mercy Intellectual Disabilities Services, Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program, Operation Safety Net®, and Pittsburgh Mercy Family Health Center. Together, these Pittsburgh Mercy programs and their 1,700 employees serve more than 33,000 individuals annually at more than 60 locations in Southwestern Pennsylvania. To learn more about Pittsburgh Mercy or to make a donation in support of its important work in the community, visit www.pittsburghmercy.org.

About Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank

[Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank](#), a member of [Feeding America](#), is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1980 that distributes more than 31 million meals annually throughout a network of nearly 400 member agencies across 11 counties in Southwestern Pennsylvania. For more information on hunger in our region or how to get involved, visit www.pittsburghfoodbank.org.

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