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The organizational partners of Second Avenue Commons today released statistics about its first six months of operation. The unique facility, serving adults experiencing homelessness, has been at capacity since its opening on November 22, 2022. With only six months of operational history, it has already demonstrated the ability to serve hundreds of at-risk individuals by providing comprehensive care and resources in one location.

Located at 700 Second Avenue in downtown Pittsburgh, Second Avenue Commons (2AC) offers shelter beds for 95 individuals and has the capacity to provide 40 additional beds for overflow. A daytime engagement center gives individuals experiencing homelessness an opportunity to access hygiene and laundry facilities, grab a lunch, pick up mail, or connect to other essential services. Pittsburgh Mercy oversees day-to-day shelter and engagement center operations in collaboration with a number of other organizations.

“Since the opening of Second Avenue Commons on November 22, 2022, Pittsburgh Mercy has helped 622 unique individuals in the engagement center, 281 individuals served in the year-round shelter beds, and 527 people in the winter overflow shelter,” stated Tony Beltran, president and CEO of Pittsburgh Mercy. “In addition to helping hundreds of vulnerable individuals connect to benefits, employment, primary care, behavioral health, and substance use treatment services, we provided hundreds of people with vital wrap-around social services and supports to empower them in their journey to well-being and more permanent housing. We connected 450 individuals to benefits. We helped 300 people update their resumes and apply for jobs. We connected over 300 people to health services. These wrap-around services are essential to helping people prepare for success.”

Within the first six hours of opening on November 22, the facility was at capacity and has served thousands in its short time operating. As just one additional example, Community Kitchen Pittsburgh has provided over 39,700 meals.

In addition to shelter services, 2AC serves as a central location for services with multiple programs offering a continuum of care for those who are experiencing homelessness. Housed inside the facility, the UPMC Second Avenue Commons Health Center provides comprehensive, compassionate, and trauma-informed care to patients experiencing homelessness in order to help them achieve their health goals and support their transition to stable housing.
Operating under the leadership of Medical Director Dr. Anita Leon-Jhong, the center offers services including behavioral health assessments, treatment, and linkage to care; foot care; gynecologic care including pap smear and contraception; Hepatitis C screening and treatment; STD screening and treatment; substance use disorder treatment; treatment of acute medical conditions related to skin, urinary, respiratory infections, etc.; treatment of chronic medical conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, and COPD; and, wound care, minor injuries and suturing.

"Patients visit our clinic for a variety of reasons, and sometimes it's the first time they've seen a physician in years," said Dr. Leon-Jhong. "Patients often seek physicals so they can qualify for a new job or housing, but other times patients need help getting a refill on their medication or being connected to other services including behavioral health. Because of the way we're set up, we're able to connect patients with the services they need quickly. We have a number of patients who return to the clinic for different reasons, and I feel grateful that we have been able to establish a reputation in the community as a safe place to receive care."

From November 2022 through March 2023, the UPMC Second Avenue Commons Health Center:

- Completed 643 visits and saw 213 unique patients
- Ordered over 40 prescription glasses through a partnership with OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation
- Dispensed 169 prescriptions, for free, from the Health Center's on-site medication supply

The facility also offers 43 single-room occupancy (SRO) units that are assigned through the Allegheny Link assessment and prioritization process. The SRO units are managed by NDC Asset Management. Assessments with outreach workers began several months prior to the opening of 2AC and have continued since that time to identify individuals exiting homelessness to move into these units. Visitors and residents have also been connected to outside programs for behavioral health services and substance use disorder.

"As one of our region's most experienced providers of homeless services, Pittsburgh Mercy is continuing to strengthen the homeless services continuum in Allegheny County by investing in safe, affordable housing, wrap-around services, and technology built upon evidence-based assessments," said Beltran. "Second Avenue Commons remains an important part of our investment in the homeless services continuum."

While Second Avenue Commons has only been open for six months, the collaborative care model has already proven to have significant impact on individual lives. Participation in these programs is voluntary but is more likely once an unhoused individual has stable housing, access to food and timely medical care. The Commons early efforts have led to:

- 43 formerly unhoused individuals have moved into the SRO apartments
- 18 people moved to permanent housing
- 22 guests have secured employment
- 450 individuals have been connected to benefits
- 176 individuals were connected to treatment for substance use disorder
- 115 individuals were connected to behavioral health services
- 75 individuals have obtained identification cards

The creation of the Second Avenue Commons was the result of a dynamic and complex process that coincided with COVID restrictions, but after three years of planning, fund raising and construction, the Commons became one of Pittsburgh's primary locations of helping those who are unhoused.

"We are fortunate to have had the continued support of the Pittsburgh community in this effort," said Erin Dalton, Director of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services. "We have seen contributions including financial donations, personal volunteering, food donations, educational offerings, and special
events for the residents. The compassion and resources of this community, and the dedication of the resident agencies involved with the Commons, has made these successes possible."

Other contributing organizations and businesses include 1HoodMedia, Allegheny Health Network, Arthur Maulet and the Pittsburgh Steelers, donations made through Chewy.com, Clean the World, Community Day School, Fox Chapel High School, Giant Eagle, GNC, Guerilla Eye Service, LuLu’s Free Shop, Neighborhood Legal Services, OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation, PNC, Point Park University, St. Nicholas Church, Shady Side Academy, Snee-Reinhart Charitable Foundation, and University of Pittsburgh Street Medicine, to name a few.

People experiencing homelessness, or those seeking to refer someone experiencing homelessness, should connect with Allegheny Link at 1-866-730-2368 for support and resource coordination. Link staff are available by phone from 8 AM to 5 PM and in-person at One Smithfield Street in downtown Pittsburgh from 8 AM to 4 PM. They will assist with options from emergency shelter to more permanent housing within the homeless system as well as guidance on affordable housing within the larger community.