

Dane County Exec Parisi: Cuts ribbon for new homeless day resource center, The Beacon

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Today Dane County Executive Joe Parisi, along with representatives from Catholic Charities Madison, the City of Madison, and the United Way of Dane County, cut the ribbon for the new Homeless Day Resource Center, known as The Beacon. The county-owned building, located on [615 East Washington Avenue](#), will advance the community's goal of helping those who struggle with homelessness get into housing when it officially opens on Monday, October 16. It will be open to the public seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., including holidays.

"Opening The Beacon is a significant step towards helping the most vulnerable in our community get back on their feet," said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. "Addressing homelessness is a community effort that requires us to confront its underlying causes. The Beacon will allow guests to seek shelter and benefit from critical services that can address their personal needs and help them find housing."

The Beacon includes separate family areas, private offices and meeting rooms to allow providers to meet confidentially with individuals and families and connect them with much needed services. In the center's first few months, guests will have access to housing assessment and housing search assistance, and can use dignity services such as showers, laundry, meals and snacks, coffee, day storage, refuge from the elements, telephones, mail center, a computer lab, and referral to other critical community supports.

After the first of the year, partner agencies that currently provide services in the community will begin to hold regular office hours at The Beacon. Services in the first few months of 2018 are expected to include education and training, preventative medical services (foot care clinics), and connection to FoodShare or BadgerCare, with even more partners joining in phases throughout 2018.

“Catholic Charities, operator of The Beacon, is connecting to every guest coming to the homeless resource center and recognizing that they have unique challenges. It is our responsibility to create an environment of dignity and respect where individuals, families and children can feel safe and welcome,” said Jackson Fonder, President and CEO of Catholic Charities. “We will build trusting relationships that will lead to connecting them to basic and critical services and ultimately, their personal solutions to end their homelessness. Our staff and many volunteers will support at least 150 people each day.”

Previous Dane County budget investments of \$4.75 million helped lead to The Beacon’s opening. A total of \$175,000 in County Executive Parisi’s 2018 budget will go toward operating the center seven days a week in 2018. Other partners responsible for sharing the costs of operating the center include Catholic Charities, the City of Madison, and the United Way of Dane County.

“United Way supports The Beacon because it isn’t just a laundry facility, or kitchen, or case manager’s office—it’s going to be all those things and more,” said United Way of Dane County President and CEO Renee Moe. “Our community can meet families working toward stability where together, we can identify housing and life goals and have all the resources in one place to holistically address all of the families’ social, economic and housing needs. We know education, income and health are the building blocks to a stable life, and a coordinated entry point is good for our whole community.”

Dane County purchased the building, previously known as the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce facility, in the summer of 2016 for \$1.75 million. Catholic Charities was chosen as the center’s operator following a standard request for proposal process in the fall of that same year. A conditional use permit was later granted by the City of Madison, allowing renovation of the building to take place. Close to downtown Madison, The Beacon is located on a bus line, near bike trails, and has parking.