



City of Arts & Innovation

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City of Riverside Successful in Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness

With just a few hours to spare in 2015, homes were found for last few of 89 veterans

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Six months after Mayor Rusty Bailey accepted the Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness from President Obama, Riverside has successfully housed 89 homeless veterans within the city who had been identified as needing housing.

The effort kicked off in June after Riverside joined the nationwide effort to end veteran homelessness. Riverside set a very ambitious goal to house 86 homeless veterans by the end of 2015, then ended up housing 89 veterans, with City staff getting the last veteran into housing the afternoon of Dec. 31.

"I am so proud of our City staff and immensely grateful for their efforts in combating homelessness among veterans in Riverside," Mayor Bailey said. "It's no small feat to change the life of one homeless person, but to do that for 89 veterans within six months, that's just an amazing accomplishment."

The effort was led by the Community and Economic Development Department and included major contributions from the department's Housing Division and Homeless Outreach Team, as well as the Riverside Police Department and a host of partner agencies.

"The City of Riverside's dedication, leadership and continued support, including the allocation of resources, has given our department an incredible opportunity to compassionately serve our City," said Emilio Ramirez, Deputy Director of Community and Economic Development. "We will continue helping people, including veterans, get off the streets and into clean and safe places to live."

Some of the keys to the effort included:

- A "Housing First" approach to removing barriers and helping veterans obtain permanent housing as quickly as possible, without unnecessary prerequisites.
- Prioritizing the most vulnerable veterans, especially those experiencing chronic homelessness, for permanent supportive housing opportunities, including those created through the HUD-VASH program.

- Coordinating efforts to identify and engage every veteran experiencing homelessness and focusing outreach efforts on achieving housing outcomes.
- Targeting rapid re-housing interventions, including those made possible through the Department of Veterans Affairs' Supportive Services for veterans and their families who need shorter-term rental subsidies and services to reintegrate back into our communities.
- Leveraging housing and services that can help veterans who are ineligible for some of the VA's programs get into stable housing.
- Increasing early detection and access to preventive services so at-risk veterans and their families remain stably housed.
- Closely monitoring progress toward the goal, including in achieving permanent housing outcomes.

The City enjoys strong partnerships with Veterans Administration Loma Linda, Riverside County Housing Authority, Riverside County Department of Mental Health, Riverside County Department of Social Services, Habitat for Humanity, U.S. Vets and Lighthouse, all of which pooled resources to achieve the best results.

The Mayor's Office worked with several private businesses that assisted in the effort to find homes for the veterans and helped provide assistance with basic needs. These partners included The California Apartment Association of the Inland Empire, Walmart, Home Depot and Ace Hardware.

"Each of our community partners stepped up to the plate for our local veterans," Mayor Bailey said. "It's unacceptable for anyone who has selflessly served our country to be living on the street. Now that we have achieved this milestone, we must work to ensure that such efforts continue."