



May 3, 2017

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact

Gwenn Wysling, Executive Director
Kim Fischbach, Director of Development
Phone: 541-322-8768

**BETHLEHEM INN READY TO PROCEED WITH CONSTRUCTION
OF NEW FAMILY RESIDENCE AND SERVICE HUB**

Bend, Ore. - Bethlehem Inn announced on May 2nd that the City of Bend has granted the organization authorization to proceed with plans to construct its new 18,600 square foot Family Residence and Service Hub. When completed in mid-2018, the new facility will double the Inn's capacity to shelter homeless families, replacing an aging five-family residence with space for 10 families at any given time. It will be the first facility in Central Oregon specifically designed to support families and individuals transitioning from homelessness to stability.

Construction will occur on the current Bethlehem Inn site at 3705 N. Highway 97, in Bend. SunWest Builders serves as the general contractor. Executive Director Gwenn Wysling explains how the construction will take place without interfering with the Inn's services to homeless families and individuals. "Before we start building the new Family Residence, we will install a portable structure that will allow our program to continue operating during demolition and construction. Our goal is complete construction without interrupting or diminishing the critical services we provide every day."

Bethlehem Inn announced earlier that their Transforming Lives Together Capital Campaign has raised more than 90% of the funds needed to complete the new Family Residential and Service Hub facility, which has an estimated cost of \$5.3 million. Campaign Chair Heather Tennant Salvesen is spearheading the effort to complete funding, and also to launch a second phase of construction currently in the planning stages.

According to Salvesen, "Support for the capital campaign has been widespread. Our top supporter is a local couple who pledged \$550,000. The Ford Family Foundation in Roseburg granted \$500,000 because of our work with children and families. Local Rotary Clubs committed \$200,000 to provide quality food in a suitable kitchen. For so many different reasons, our community is making this happen."



Asked why she gave to the campaign, Salvesen responded, "Families like mine are supporting the rebuilding of Bethlehem Inn because it puts a permanent stamp on our region as place of caring and compassion. When people go through a hard time in their lives and even lose their homes, there will always be a place to find a helping hand."

Central Oregon Health Council (COHC) is another major donor to the project, having committed \$500,000 in 2016. Donna Mills, COHC Executive Director explains the health impact of the project. "We acknowledge that food and shelter are some of the single most social determinants of health. The Health Council's vision of Creating a Healthier Central Oregon is grounded in first things first. We appreciate the care and respect Bethlehem Inn affords the members of our region during their most vulnerable seasons of life."

With authorization to proceed starting this week, Bethlehem Inn anticipates being ready to open the new facility in about one year. The building, designed by Ascent Architecture and Interiors, will house approximately 120 families per year, and provide a service hub serving as many as 1,150 adults and children. The service hub will include kitchen and dining facilities, classrooms and program space for services that help residents transition from homelessness to stability.

"This project means Bethlehem Inn will be here for generations to come," says Wysling. "Families and individuals do fall into situational homelessness, maybe because of an eviction, or a job loss, or a health crisis. Because our community cares, there will be a place to go to turn their lives around and get back on track."

###