COMMUNITY

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space with roommates as part of House of Refuge Sunnyslope. Men and women live in different homes. The program has the capacity for 83 residents but the number who live in House of Refuge Sunnyslope homes can vary day to day. There is a program for men, one for single women and a third one for single women with children. Residents' living costs vary but most pay about $100 a week to help cover housing, meals and utility costs.

The adult residents in the House of Refuge Sunnyslope homes must be working full-time and participate several evenings a week in Bible studies and life skills classes provided on the campus. They learn about budgeting, nutrition, parenting, job interviewing techniques and other important lessons to survive as independent adults in the life skills classes. Those who live in the House of Refuge Sunnyslope homes also must share meals together several nights a week on campus. The residents have access to scholarships to further their education, as well as help pay for transportation and dental and vision services.

Lemonds, who served in the Army for three years, had worked as a respiratory therapist for 10 years but said she was not being compensated fairly at a company and she had to leave.

"I lost everything I own and my dogs," she said. "I was living with my friend for two weeks. I lost my car, which made getting a (new) job a lot harder. When you become homeless, it is absolutely devastating to your whole being."

Tammy Lemonds, a veteran who worked for many years as a respiratory therapist, is grateful to live in one of the houses that House of Refuge Sunnyslope offers to people who have struggled with homelessness (photo by House of Refuge Sunnyslope).

While she studies to regain her license as a respiratory therapist, Lemonds said the staff members, volunteers and fellow residents at House of Refuge Sunnyslope offer her support.

"I can walk up to anybody here and I get a hug," she said. "It's not just a place to live, it is a place to take a breath and just settle and figure out where it went wrong."

That is the kind of comfortable "sense of community" House of Refuge Sunnyslope aims to provide, Julie Supplee, executive director of the organization said. Volunteers prepare meals for the residents. Residents also are matched with volunteer mentors.

There are many success stories about men and women who have graduated from the program and moved into their own homes. Some of them recovered from substance abuse issues and some lost their jobs. The residents must be clean and sober to live in the homes.

While the maximum length of time people can stay in the men's and women's housing is a year, the typical stay is six to nine months. Single mothers can stay for up to 24 months but the typical stay is 12 to 18 months.

"We love being part of the Sunnyslope community," Supplee said. "We're very volunteer-driven and we love to see people move from homelessness to independence. Our goal is, we try to help them prepare."

Supplee estimates that House of Refuge Sunnyslope has helped 5,000 to 6,000 people in its 31 years of existence. Last year the organization assisted 184 men, women and children and processed 182 tons of food in its food bank, which provided 74,860 meals.

Barbara Andersen of Sunnyslope volunteers at House of Refuge Sunnyslope sorting donations of clothes, linens, blankets and other items.

"I just think they're completely honorable and hard-working and are motivated by a love for Christ and that is why they're here," Andersen said. "It's a needed ministry now more so than ever."

House of Refugee Sunnyslope always is in need of volunteers. Anyone who wants to do cleaning, landscaping, organizing and other work on the campus can attend the Service Project Day at House of Refugee Sunnyslope from 8:30 to 11 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 14, at the park at 9835 N. 7th St. Those who want to learn about volunteer opportunities can come to the Explore and Engage Meeting from 9 to 10:15 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 28, at the same park. Anyone interested in participating in either or both events should RSVP to info@refugesunnyslope.com.

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and a change to the Circulator route. Out of the survey respondents, 70-percent said in order to improve their community, trees and shade were needed most, followed by streetlights and sidewalks. The survey noted most riders use the Circulator to run errands and visit health services and community sites, including places to eat.

The City of Phoenix and Valley Metro have been "very open" to considering the changes to the SMART Circulator route, said Julie Scholer, Community Health Innovations supervisor for the Maricopa County Department of Public Health. Serious consideration has been given to adding a bus stop at Mountain View Park so residents could easily access the park and community garden, Scholer said. The county health department has continued working with the Resident Ambassadors on other projects in Sunnyslope including doing audits to assess the amenities, resources and conditions of parks.

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