**Central Iowa Shelter & Services**

**Mulberry Farms & Food**

**DuPont Pioneer innovationLEADER of the Year Award**

1. **Originality of the Innovation: Is this completely a new concept/idea/process or the re-imaging of an existing one? Was it developed independently or in cooperation with others?**

With 22 years of proven service delivery and management experience, Central Iowa Shelter & Services’ mission remains to provide free shelter and meals to homeless adults regardless of physical or emotional conditions and facilitate their move toward self-sufficiency.

In late summer of 2014, Central Iowa Shelter & Services (CISS) constructed a 30-foot diameter growing dome, additional raised beds and composting area. Our new Mulberry Farms & Food Training Program provides year-round fresh produce and provides nutritional education and basic greenhouse management including production planning, growing principles, watering, etc. CISS will now be able to provide a locally sourced food solution for increasing the nutritional value of meals provided through our established Community Kitchen program.

One way in which CISS moves people toward self-sufficiency is through our Community Kitchen program. Along with providing more than 115,355 meals annually, the Community Kitchen offers training, work experience, and employment for up to 20 homeless adults at $7.50 per hour. Participants receive direct supervision, instruction and experience to prepare them for employment in the food service industry.

Taking the knowledge learned through our Community Kitchen, Mulberry Farms & Foods (MFF) allows CISS to expand workforce training for individuals into two additional areas. With support from community partners, CISS has added retail and food production skills training to our programs. Clients have access to paid training opportunities through our retail food cart and our food production center. Similar to the Community Kitchen, MFF participants receive direct supervision, instruction and experience to prepare them for employment in the food service industry and assistance with housing and external job placement.

All trainees have access to learn skills from each food service training program and be supported by the Employment Coach. This position develops and implements the curriculum for each training program and provides direct supervision and training for all participants. This person is the certified job developer for the programs and works to assist trainees with job placement after their participation.

**Retail Food Cart**

The CISS Food Cart program will be implemented in the spring of 2015. In partnership with Michael LaValle, it will offer training, work experience and employment for up to 12 homeless adults at $7.50 per hour. This program will operate on a 6-month seasonal basis as the operation is weather dependent. During the season trainees will learn menu development, food purchasing, food preparation, product pricing and retail customer service when out operating the cart.

**Food Production Center**

The CISS Food Production Center offers training, work experience and employment for up to 20 homeless adults at $7.50 per hour. Food production occurs year-round as the production center has a growing dome, but the quantities will fluctuate during the seasons as additional growing spaces beyond the growing dome are raised beds. Trainees are learning basic greenhouse management including production planning, growing principles, watering, etc. The food grown by the trainees will support the food needs of our Retail Food Cart and Community Kitchen by providing fresh ingredients.

The additional training programs are available on-site at CISS (1420 Mulberry St., Des Moines) for all homeless adults over 18 years old. CISS is a shelter provider partner for Polk County communities of Altoona, Ankeny, Clive, Des Moines, Johnston, Pleasant Hill, Urbandale, West Des Moines, and Windsor Heights.

The program employs shelter clients for whom typical employment is difficult or impossible to obtain. This program offers clients a source of income and an avenue for reintegrating into the community in which they live. By having a self-sufficiency coordinator, the program will provide a level of intensity and focus on skill building and empowering individuals to access employment they never thought possible.

The success of the program will be to create employment for shelter clients, inform the public about shelter services and integrate shelter clients into the redevelopment of downtown Des Moines by operating a food service venture that is projected to be fiscally self-sustaining within three years. As the program stabilizes, it is hoped that clients learn all the basics of running a food service establishment and further their careers in the culinary industry of the Greater Des Moines community.

The success of Mulberry Farms & Foods would not be possible without our partnerships in the community. CISS thrives with strategic partnerships to provide services that help meet the needs of all clients. Trainees have access to and are referred for services necessary to support their completion of CISS training programs. Below is a list of the organizational partners and important collaborators in clients successfully completing training and finding work.

**Current Partners**

• Beacon of Life – Referral source for training program participants

• Michael LaValle – local restaurateur providing a food cart to use and allowing retail space for CISS.

• Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) HiSET Program - CISS partners with DMACC to provide HiSET preparation classes on site to clients in our housing programs and anyone in the community.

• Iowa Legal Aid – Partnering with CISS to provide free legal services to our guests.

• Goodwill of Central Iowa - Providing a weekly jobs coach to provide resume writing, mock interview and job application skills.

• Meal Sites - All site space is donated, including the Polk County Senior Center, Iglesia Apostolica Church, 701 Grand and the Norwoodville Community Center. Meal sites do not charge rental fees for the program space used five days per week in each of the facilities, resulting in more than 650 hours of program space donated annually. All meal sites provided are located in easy to access locations in neighborhoods with great need.

**Potential Partners**

• Iowans for Social and Economic Development – Providing small business development assistance and individual development accounts

• Small Business Development Center – Providing small business development assistance

• Orchestrate Management – Potential source for job placement in their many restaurants and businesses.

• Downtown Community Alliance – Additional food cart vending opportunities such as Downtown Farmers’ Market, Welcome Back to Walnut Street and other festivals

• City of Des Moines – Potential source for job placement in Parks and Recreation

• YMCA – Referral source for additional training program participants

**2. Impact of the Innovation: Did this innovation meet an unmet need? How has is affected a specific industry and/or the public at large? If internal, what impact has it had on the processes and efficiencies of your organization?**

Homelessness is a complex social issue that can only be reduced and eliminated by bringing the community together to provide targeted services removing barriers to self-sufficiency.

In September 2012, CISS opened its new facility. Growing from a 96 bed facility to a 42,000 square foot facility equipped to provide expanded emergency shelter (150); expanded transitional housing for Veterans (19 rooms); and 38 Project Based Section 8 Voucher efficiency apartments. Along with expanded housing capacity, CISS also provides an on-site health clinic, food pantry, clothing closet, classroom and community resources offices.

On a daily basis, Central Iowa Shelter & Services provides shelter to upwards of 300 people. Clients come from all walks of life, each with their own set of barriers to moving beyond homelessness. For some this may include mental illness and substance abuse issues while others may lack education and have a disability preventing them from working. Regardless of their issues and barriers, CISS is here to extend a warm hand and provide opportunities for individuals to eliminate barriers and becomes self-sufficient, contributing members of Greater Des Moines.

Reducing and eliminating homelessness takes more than providing a place to sleep and a warm meal; it takes eliminating barriers such as no education, illiteracy, addiction, health problems, etc. to move people beyond homelessness. CISS harnesses the collective power of other human services providers, volunteer groups, the faith community and businesses to help remove these barriers from clients.

The Homeless Opportunity Center allows CISS to be dynamic in meeting the needs of homeless adults by providing space for services to be located onsite increasing access to necessary services and providing accountability to those seeking services. This nationally replicated model is the first of its kind in Central Iowa and has advanced the provisions of homeless and housing services to the most vulnerable Iowans. With everyone working together, it lifts the burden off the community and begins to make Greater Des Moines a safer, healthier, more vital and more civil community.

Mulberry Farms & Food provides a multitude of benefits to clients of Central Iowa Shelter & Services as well as recipients of the food produced through the program. Trainees experience skill improvement, receive nutrition education and temporary budget relief with the aim to transition into competitive employment. Additionally, working with the Self-Sufficiency Coordinator, trainees will receive referrals to onsite partners for support in housing, mental health services and other necessary supports to ensure each trainee’s successful completion of the program.

Helping chronic and long-term homeless adults reintegrate into competitive employment is one of the fastest ways to help someone out of homelessness. Mulberry Farms & Food gives individuals access to training and employment supports. Throughout the training program trainees will receive additional supportive services to help shelter clients for whom typical employment is difficult or impossible to obtain.

**3. Commercial impact of the innovation: Has the innovation gone to market? What financial evidence or market acceptance information does the innovation have to support new value for the end user? What is the quantifiable evidence of success?**

Mulberry Farms & Food provides a multitude of benefits to clients of Central Iowa Shelter & Services as well as recipients of the food produced through the program. Mulberry Farms & Food offers training for up to 20 homeless adults at $7.50 per hour. Trainees will experience skill improvement, receive nutrition education and temporary budget relief with the aim to transition into competitive employment. Additionally, working with the trainees will receive referrals to onsite partners for support in housing, mental health services and other necessary supports to ensure each trainee’s successful completion of the program.

CISS has established these criteria to evaluate Mulberry Farms & Food:

• 65% of trainees will complete the Mulberry Farms & Food Training Program

• 100% of trainees will experience skill improvement and will be tracked through pre and post skill and knowledge testing

• 45% of trainees will transition into employment

• 20% of trainees will increase their income by 20% or more.

• 100% of trainees will experience budget relief through Mulberry Farms & Food.

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According to the 2013 Gallup® Well-Being poll, self-worth and employment in the US are tightly connected. People who are unemployed or under-employed are 16.6% more likely to experience depression. When you have a job, you have a continuous source of feedback that you are a contributing member of society. Depression impacts a person’s desire to work and look for work. If an individual lacks other social supports it becomes easier to withdraw and “why bother?” prevails.

Mulberry Farms & Food has the potential to reintegrate individuals who have long been out of the workforce in a meaningful and empowering way to move them beyond homelessness. The program will impact many lives in the community through paid training, skill building and helping others in the community.

**4. Developing a culture of innovation: Does the individual or company promote an atmosphere conducive to innovation? Have they consistently been a leader in their field when it comes to innovation?**

Central Iowa Shelter & Services’ vision is to prevent duplication of services by nurturing the growth of collaborations and partnerships that serve to rebuild people’s lives and bring people out of homelessness.

Daily, CISS provides shelter to upwards of 300 people. Clients come from all walks of life, each with their own set of barriers to moving beyond homelessness. For some this may include mental illness and substance abuse issues while others may lack education and have a disability preventing them from working. Regardless of their barriers, CISS extends a warm hand and provides opportunities for individuals to eliminate barriers and become self-sufficient, contributing members of Greater Des Moines.

Armed with this mission, it makes CISS rich with opportunity to build social capital as ending homelessness takes openness to innovative practices, partnerships and collaborations. In the year, CISS’ partnerships have grown tremendously.

CISS could continue being just a place to sleep and a warm bed, but how does that help end homelessness? It doesn’t. That is why the social capital CISS builds with other human services providers, volunteer groups, the faith community and businesses is so important. With everyone working together, it lifts a burden off the community and begins to make Greater Des Moines a safer, healthier, more vital and civil community.

In order to fully serve our clients, CISS has long-standing partnerships with DMACC for HiSet classes; Plymouth Congregational Church – provides funding for HiSet testing; Community Kitchen (annually serving more than 100,000 meals); Broadlawns Dental Clinic; House of Mercy for substance abuse evaluations; Iowa Legal Aid; Primary Health Care; U.S. Department of Veterans Administration; Alcoholics Anonymous; Goodwill of Central Iowa; Salvation Army; and Polk County Health Services.

In addition, this past summer, the Crisis Observation Center held its grand opening at CISS, which aims to serve adults in mental health crisis. Open 24/7, the Center is staffed by medical and mental health professionals from Eyerly Ball Community Health Services, an organization that offers a complete continuum of adult mental health services, and the Mobile Crisis Response Team.

CISS provides comprehensive basic needs services targeted to reduce the incidence of chronic and long-term homelessness in Central Iowa. Our programming addresses the high incidence of unemployment, mental illness, chronic disabilities and chemical dependency, particularly among guests who are experiencing chronic and long-term homelessness. In FY 2014, CISS served 2,156 (20% increase) unduplicated guests and 115,355 (14% increase) meals were served through our Community Kitchen.

CISS continues to serve as the largest emergency sheltering facility in the state of Iowa, currently serving 40% of Iowa's homeless citizens. While other service providers are addressing homeless issues, CISS is the only emergency sheltering program in central Iowa structured to provide comprehensive services targeted to assist adults experiencing long-term and chronic homelessness and emergency housing for individual women unaccompanied by children. CISS also provides case management/supportive services, Community Kitchen meal sites, healthy food access and transportation services. Our centralized downtown Des Moines location is within walking distance of the metropolitan bus line and hub, CISS provides guest accessibility to a full continuum of community resources.

CISS is here to serve the needs of homeless in Central Iowa. The shelter is 42,000+ square feet and provides emergency housing for 207 clients (ages 18 and up) including 50 women and 100 men; 19 transitional housing units for Veterans; and 38 units Section 8 Program-Based Voucher permanent housing units. It has on-site health clinic; Des Moines Area Religious Council food pantry; and space to serve client's needs including trainings, computer lab and small/large group space for clients and surrounding community. We are also serving families through the Community Kitchen, health clinic, food pantry, clothing closet and computer lab.

Great care went into the planning of the new facility and we looked for innovative shelter facilities and programming throughout communities of sizes. We have incorporated green building practices into our new facility and continue to build partnerships to develop innovative programming that will best serve the needs of our clients.