



**CLEVELAND COUNTY
RECOVERY PROGRAM**



FOOD & SHELTER

Cleveland County Partners with Food and Shelter to Provide Support Services

Cleveland County commits \$1 Million in ARPA funds to provide support for thousands of struggling families

NORMAN, OKLA (December 8, 2022) - On Thursday, Cleveland County announced its partnership with Food and Shelter, a non-profit organization that provides food and housing support.

“After hosting numerous stakeholder meetings and surveys, we were able to determine the economic impact the pandemic had on the people of Cleveland County,” said County Commissioner Rod Cleveland. “It was especially tough for marginalized populations. By spending funds wisely in existing nonprofits such as Food and Shelter, we are better able to leverage the network these agencies already have in place to help people.”

Food and Shelter’s mission of service is consistent with Cleveland County’s commitment to invest ARPA funds to support the health and welfare of county residents.

“Sparked by the COVID pandemic, an economic crisis impacted our county, state and country in ways we have not experienced in over a generation. Disproportionately impacted were those at the lowest economic spectrum of our community, and we know that the economic crisis is still wreaking havoc on those with the least in our community,” said April Doshier, executive director of Food and Shelter. “As the price of housing, food and fuel continue to rise, we know even more moms, dads, seniors and veterans are looking at their monthly budget and realizing it is no longer enough. Many of those people will find their way to Food and Shelter for assistance.”

Cleveland County’s Veteran Coordinator has worked with other entities to reduce veteran homelessness and the county has a long history of supporting agencies who directly serve vulnerable populations.

“By supporting Food and Shelter — a nonprofit that serves people with food and housing needs — we are empowering them to help Cleveland County families keep a roof over their heads and food in their bellies,” said County Commissioner Harold Haralson. “These are key elements for supporting overall health. As a retired medical professional, I know how important this can be for future health, particularly for children.”

During the pandemic, Food and Shelter found themselves on the front lines of the response. Food pantry requests increased by 500 percent each month, along with requests for rental assistance.

“No child living in Cleveland County should ever have to go hungry,” said County Commissioner Darry Stacy. “We had the power to do something to alleviate that by investing in the robust network of nonprofits operating within Cleveland County.”

As needs continued to mount, the team at Food and Shelter chose to remain open without reducing services.

“When the lines at our food pantry grew longer, we stayed open longer and delivered meals to seniors and veterans,” Doshier said. “We knew it would be critical for the health of our community to ensure people were still eating healthy to remain well. At the same time, families who had always been able to pay their rent were facing eviction for the first time, so we increased our efforts to keep people housed by paying rent and utilities out to keep thousands of people from experiencing even a day of homelessness.”

Last year, Food and Shelter served over 210,000 meals, distributed more than 78,000 pounds of food through their food pantry and provided supportive housing to more than 1,000 people in Cleveland County. Through case management and other outreach services, they were ultimately able to prevent homelessness for nearly 300 households, providing support and stability to hundreds. And, as inflation soars, the need continues.

“Standing with struggling families during the pandemic helped this community remain strong and showed the fabric of Cleveland County. Today, we see the need coming forward as the rippling effects of the COVID pandemic continue to plague poor and struggling families,” April said. “This support from Cleveland County means Food and Shelter will be able to meet those people where they are, providing food for moms to feed their children and housing for so many people who otherwise would find themselves living in a place none of us would wish on those we love. We are stronger when we are together, and there is no greater investment than the one we make in the children and families in Cleveland County. We can’t thank the Cleveland County Commissioners and residents enough for this incredible gift.”

Investing ARPA dollars in this way creates long term economic impacts for the county as well.

“Through their work in assisting the healing of individuals and families dealing with hunger, homelessness and housing insecurity, Food and Shelter also improves the local economy by helping mitigate issues that contribute to joblessness, chronic homelessness and physical illness or injury,” Cleveland said. “Cleveland County is proud to partner with Food and Shelter by investing American Rescue Plan monies to help with the recovery of unforeseen costs they incurred due to the pandemic.”

For more information on their services or to help, please visit www.foodandshelterinc.org or call 405-360-4954.

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About Food and Shelter

Food and Shelter was founded in 1983 by a group of compassionate members of McFarlin United Methodist Church led by Harriet Leigh and Kathryn Selmon. They began distributing meals to hungry people out in community parks but soon it became clear the need was greater than anticipated and McFarlin UMC brought in a coalition of volunteers to expand services. In 1987, Food for Friends opened in their original location at 104 West Comanche which is where services were located until the new campus on Reed Avenue opened in 2017.

About Cleveland County

Cleveland County covers more than 500 square miles and a steadily growing population of close to 300,000 people (2020 census), making it the third most populous county in Oklahoma.

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Additional Background on services provided by Food and Shelter:

- Dining Room Service: Food and Shelter serves two hot meals per day every day of the week, every day of the year. We open our doors to anyone who is hungry regardless of housing status.
- Food Pantry: Our food pantry is open Monday through Friday 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. Guests can shop weekly and need to provide proof of residency in Cleveland County for assistance.
- Day Shelter: Our dining room doubles as a day shelter and outreach center for individuals experiencing homelessness. We open each day 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and offer restrooms, showers, laundry, support services, and a space to get inside.
- Emergency Shelter: Food and Shelter operates an emergency shelter program for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Our cottages are available for shelter and when shelter is full and funding is available we can offer motel stays for those working on a housing plan.
- Re-Housing: Food and Shelter operates a re-housing program for those experiencing homelessness and are ready to get back into permanent housing. Rehousing services are based on funding availability.
- Permanent Supportive Housing: Our PSH program is a HUD funded program aimed at helping those who have long-term homelessness have housing and support services. This program is only available for Continuum of Care referrals.
- Prevention Assistance: Food and Shelter helps individuals and families avoid eviction by helping with rent and utilities. This program is available as funding allows. Those who need assistance can call in on the 2nd Tuesday of each month to inquire for assistance.