



Living Room

Wes Berry
President
Joining Hearts
P.O. Box 54808
Atlanta, Georgia 30308

April 12, 2016

Dear Wes and the Joining Hearts Board of Directors,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this request for funding to support the Emergency Lodging and Recuperative Care programs at Living Room. The support our organization has received from Joining Hearts over the years has been instrumental in building our capacity to serve our neighbors in need and make sure that no one living with HIV/AIDS is forced to sleep a night on the streets and we hope to continue growing to meet the ever increasing demand for our services.

Gratefully,

Angela Susten

Acting Executive Director
Living Room, Inc.

Joining Hearts Support Proposal
April 2016

Request Amount: \$8,000

Funding Focus: *Emergency Lodging and Recuperative Care* for those living with HIV/AIDS and facing homelessness in Atlanta

Organizational Overview:

Living Room's vision is to end homelessness for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). It is critical that individuals and families living with HIV/AIDS in our community have access to stable housing because we know that housing is not only an issue of maintaining human dignity, but is the proven foundation of effective medical treatment of HIV. Living Room is the leading agency in Atlanta providing assistance to PLWHA who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless. Since our inception in 1995, we have made an impact in the community by helping over 1,100 clients every year find much-needed services and sustainable, affordable housing, as well as equipping clients with the tools and skills they need to not only survive and improve their health, but to be self-sufficient and never have to experience homelessness again.

Program Overview:

The *Emergency Lodging* program provides shelter for homeless families and individuals who are medically fragile or transgender. Living Room is the only agency in the state who guarantees that any individual or family facing sleeping on the streets can come into our office and will be offered an immediate housing option. All clients are provided assistance with developing a housing plan that focuses on obtaining stable housing.

The *Recuperative Care* program assists individuals who are hospitalized and face being homeless upon discharge. After a referral from one of our five local partner hospitals, Living Room helps eligible clients stay off the streets by finding immediate placement in a residential recuperative care facility, paying for care, and providing intensive case management to work toward a permanent housing solution.

Need:

Atlanta ranks third among U.S. cities for the number of new HIV diagnoses. Social determinants including poverty and housing insecurity have been identified as some of the greatest challenges encountered by PLWHA and the Atlanta area has seen an increase in the number of individuals who had previously been stably housed and are now struggling to maintain their housing. Statistics from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) consistently show that PLWHA have a high rate of housing instability (30-40%), and that 35% of people accessing publicly-funded HIV treatment have experienced homelessness since their diagnosis. The National AIDS Housing Coalition writes that "housing is a proven structural intervention to improve access to healthcare and positive health outcomes. People living with HIV experiencing homelessness or housing instability are less likely to be virally suppressed, have lower CD4 counts and are in worse overall physical and mental health."

Over the last year, requests for Emergency Lodging rose by 34% and we served 38% more clients in Recuperative Care in 2015 when compared to 2014. We anticipate a

continued demand for these services and therefore, Living Room needs to have the ability to increase capacity. It costs \$35 per night to provide a client with emergency lodging and \$21 for each night of recuperative care.

The average tenure in Recuperative Care or Emergency Lodging is between four and six weeks, but some people require additional time until they can move into stable housing. The majority of program funding comes from Atlanta Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA), which can only be used for a maximum of 60 days in a hotel or residential facility. The funding from Joining Hearts would provide flexibility for those clients who desperately need more time in the program as well as help give Living Room the resources to make sure we are never forced to turn away someone in need.

Impact and Outcomes:

Each year, over 180 people who are literally homeless come to Living Room and receive respite that same day through the Emergency Lodging or Recuperative Care programs. These programs encompass some of the most important ways we fulfill our mission and serve those who are living with HIV/AIDS and experiencing homelessness. Recent studies by the National AIDS Housing Coalition report that among PLWHA, receiving housing assistance reduced emergency room visits by 36%, reduced hospitalizations by 57%, and reduced the risk of transmission to a partner by 96%. In 2015, we served a total of 101 clients with Emergency Lodging and 87 clients with Recuperative Care. In 2016, we hope to increase capacity and serve 250 people across these two programs.

As the eventual self-sufficiency of clients is a priority, another central goal is to help clients retain housing by evaluating and monitoring the number of emergency housing placements that obtain and maintain permanent, stable housing. Our goal is to have at least 60% of Emergency Lodging and Recuperative Care clients remain in stable housing after six months. Through follow-up with each client at intervals of three, six, nine, and twelve months following service, we identified that 68% of Emergency Lodging clients were able to discharge from the program into stable housing and 73% maintained stable housing after six months, and 64% of Recuperative Care clients were able to discharge from the program into stable housing and 79% were able to maintain that housing after six months.