



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS



MEL TROTTER
MINISTRIES



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Community Organizations Come Together to Address COVID-19 Need in Local Homeless Shelters

Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids Offers Catholic Central High School as Temporary Women's Shelter

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (April 24, 2020) – The Kent County and City of Grand Rapids Emergency Management Divisions have partnered with the Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids, Mel Trotter Ministries, and The Salvation Army to establish a temporary and safe shelter for women experiencing homelessness and who are presumed negative for COVID-19. The facility, located at Catholic Central High School, will allow permanent shelters in the area to reduce their daily populations so individuals experiencing homelessness are better able to socially/physically distance.

“We are called as Catholics to care for our brothers and sisters, especially the most vulnerable among us. While we’ve all been sheltering at home for the past month, many of our Heartside neighbors do not have that same option,” said Greg Deja, principal/CEO, Catholic Central High School. “Our decision to open our gymnasium as a dormitory reflects one of our core values at Catholic Central to serve - through which we come to know and love Christ more fully.”

The Catholic Central High School gymnasium can hold up to 75 women and provides shower facilities, food services provided by The Salvation Army, and other essential services. It will be primarily staffed by Kent County volunteers, the City of Grand Rapids Homeless Outreach Team, and Mel Trotter Ministries staff.

As a result of several organizations and individuals working together, this unique public/private partnership is addressing a critical community need and mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in large congregate settings. “This is an example of the entire community coming together to care for some of the most vulnerable in our community and do all we can to keep them safe. We are truly all in this together,” said Dennis Van Kampen, CEO, Mel Trotter Ministries. “My hope is that after this pandemic we will have created connections and work groups that continue to work together to solve some of our communities most urgent issues.”

Allison Farole, emergency manager, City of Grand Rapids, agreed with Mel Trotter. “This is the result of tremendous coordination between the city and county and their emergency management teams in supporting the logistical side of our response to COVID-19. It is an important part of our efforts to help ensure the health and safety of our community. We are grateful to our Homeless Outreach Team for assisting with the shelter’s opening and getting community members situated.”

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While this is not intended to be a long-term solution, there are significant staffing needs for the daily operation of the shelter. Volunteers for all shifts are needed and *will not* be in direct contact with known positive COVID-19 patients. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, visit www.kcest.org/volunteer.

“All of us who are working at the shelter have been moved by the strength of these women,” said Lt. Lou Hunt, emergency manager, Kent County. “It has truly been a blessing and our privilege to serve this vulnerable yet highly appreciative population.”

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