

NEWS RELEASE

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Permanent Housing Gives Homeless Youth a Fresh Start

Center for Family Services to host a Grand Opening for Camden DREAMS

CAMDEN, NJ –Center for Family Services (CFS) will hold a Grand Opening and dedication for the Camden DREAMS program in Camden, NJ.

The program and ribbon cutting will take place January 25, 2008 at 2:00 pm, at 554 Benson Street in Camden.

Each year thousands of homeless youth are forced to live in shelters, foster homes or on the street. When these youth reach the age of 18, they age out of foster care and have access to limited resources from the state. Camden DREAMS will give these young adults a chance to live independently by providing them with permanent housing and an opportunity to become self sufficient adults.

Camden DREAMS is one of the first programs in NJ that will work towards helping these young adults develop successful permanent housing while learning to live independently, manage a budget, visualize a positive future, and make responsible choices for their lives.

“Camden DREAMS will offer homeless, abandoned, and orphaned young adults the tools and support systems that they need to be successful,” said Richard Stagliano, President of CFS. “By providing them with access to education, employment systems, training, and the support that will enable them to achieve and sustain permanent housing, we empower them to become independent adults.”

The Camden DREAMS program has created thirteen efficiency and one bedroom apartments by rehabilitating neglected and abandoned historic property in Camden City. This multi-year project features green home items including solar reinforced heating, recycled materials, bamboo floors, and more. The Grand Opening will present keys to the program’s first 13 occupants.

New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Joseph V. Doria, New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) Commissioner Kevin M. Ryan and other elected officials are expected to attend the Grand Opening to address the state’s growing need for services

that will support youth aging out of foster care. The program will also include success stories and presentations from previous program participants.

“Camden DREAMS is a positive step towards decreasing the number of homeless young adults in our community,” said Commissioner Doria. “By assisting them with the development of individual, educational, vocational, and self sufficiency goals, they are given an opportunity to be successful adults and role models to others.”

This four year project is unique to Camden County in that it addresses the needs of a demographic that is often overlooked. Homeless youth over the age of 18 are forced to move out into the community on their own, and are often times uneducated, unemployed, and have no place to go. The Camden DREAMS program will assist these youth between the ages of 18-21 by giving them the support they need to lead a healthy life. To qualify for the program, the young adult must be willing to work or enroll in a vocational training program, demonstrate a willingness to commit to themselves and their future, and demonstrate an ability to live with minimal supervision.

Camden DREAMS’ 13 apartments will be supervised and managed by the Center For Family Services (CFS). The residents will have access to a support structure with caring adults and a network of others facing similar challenges. The apartments are within walking distance of state of the art medical facilities in Cooper Hospital and Lady of Lourdes Medical Center; transportation through bus routes, the new light rail system and the speedline; educational facilities at Rowan University, Rutgers University and Camden County College, as well as shopping and recreational facilities. As a resident of these apartments, youth will complete their education while learning to manage a home and maintaining employment.

“Camden DREAMS answers the call in our community for a continuum of care for young adults aging out of foster care,” said DCF Commissioner Ryan. “It will provide them with the skills necessary to lead a productive life, and help them to develop a positive vision for their future.”

This Grand Opening will provide the community with an opportunity to tour the facility, ask questions, as well as meet the staff and the people behind the implementation of the Camden DREAMS program.

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