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Local Agency Honored for work with LGBTQ Homeless Youth

Boston, MA - The Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance (MHSA) hosted its 2018 Annual Meeting at the Boston College Club, 100 Federal Street, Boston on Tuesday, December 11.

MHSA awarded the Cornerstone Award to 20 agencies across Massachusetts who partner with MHSA for its Home & Healthy for Good (HHG) program. Western MA based DIAL/SELF Youth & Community Services was one of the 20 awardees.

“The Cornerstone Award is an award MHSA usually presents to a corporate entity who has supported MHSA’s efforts to promote permanent supportive housing. This year, we have instead decided to honor those entities who have modeled the way to successfully end chronic homelessness through low-threshold permanent supportive housing: our Home & Healthy for Good providers,” stated MHSA Executive Director, Joe Finn.

HHG is a low-threshold permanent supportive housing program that prioritizes Housing First as a solution to homelessness. HHG was recognized in March with the 2018 Hearst Health Prize for excellence in population health.

The Award this year was presented by Jeffrey Rose, MD, Senior Vice President of Clinical Strategy at Hearst Health. “It was an honor to present MHSA’s Cornerstone Award to HHG’s team of service providers, whose strong collaboration is an integral part of the program’s success in improving people’s health by providing them permanent supportive housing,” Rose said. “HHG’s impressive and measurable results exemplify the work that we want to shine a light on with the Hearst Health Prize.”

William Anderson, LGBTQ Housing First Case Manager for DIAL/SELF accepted the award on behalf of the agency.

DIAL/SELF’s LGBTQ Housing First program was established as a first of its kind pilot in late 2013 and funded through a special line item in the state budget. The program supports LGBTQ Youth ages 18-24 in Franklin & Hampshire County attain and maintain housing using the low-barrier housing first model that has been used to work with chronically homeless adults. In 2013 the Housing First model had not been used widely to work with youth & young adults in this way. DIAL/SELF’s program has also been highlighted by the True Colors Foundation and at a national training sponsored by US Health and Human Services supporting Runaway & Homeless Youth programs.

In addition to DIAL/SELF, Dr. Rose presented the Cornerstone Award to representatives from the other HHG agencies including: Action Inc.; AIDS Action Committee; Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program; Boston Public Health Commission; Commonwealth Land Trust; Clinical Support Options/Friends of the Homeless; Duffy Health Center; Father Bill's & MainSpring; Heading Home; HomeStart; Housing Assistance Corporation; Justice Resource Institute; Metro Housing|Boston; MHA, Inc.; North Shore Community Action Programs, Inc.; Pine Street Inn; ServiceNet; South Middlesex Opportunity Council; and Veterans Inc.

Other special guests at the event included Speaker of the House Robert A. DeLeo who joined Finn and the family of Canon Brian S. Kelley to present the Canon Brian S. Kelley Public Servant Award to House Ways & Means Chair Jeffrey Sánchez for his dedication to ensuring that unaccompanied homeless adults have access to housing and services to end their homelessness.

“Affordable housing has been a priority for Chair Sánchez throughout his tenure at the State House, and he works hard to support community-based development and efforts to increase affordable housing across the Commonwealth,” said House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo. “He deserves this high honor as he has always wanted to make sure that every resident in Massachusetts had a place they could call home. As he departs the State House, he will leave behind a legacy of hard work, focus, and an enduring care for those in need.”

“Ensuring everyone has access to safe, stable housing is a team effort. It's through partnerships that we'll end homelessness and create better lives for everyone in the Commonwealth, and I look forward to working together on that goal in the future,” said Chair Sánchez.

The Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance (MHSA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ending homelessness in Massachusetts, with a particular focus on unaccompanied adults. Through advocacy, collaboration, education, and innovative program development, MHSA focuses on evidence-based solutions that reduce public reliance on emergency resources and prioritize access to stable housing and individualized support services. MHSA draws on the on-the-ground experience of our 85 member agencies from across Massachusetts to inform our advocacy and program development. MHSA's unique position as an intermediary between public agencies and homeless service providers enables them to create solutions to homelessness that have the greatest impact. For more information, please visit www.mhsa.net.

DIAL/SELF is Greenfield based nonprofit organization dedicated to helping young people become independent by connecting them with housing, employment, education and civic opportunities. The agency has a continuum of support services in western MA that includes street outreach, drop-in centers, food pantries and multiple housing programs. DIAL/SELF also hosts an AmeriCorps program and a regional online volunteer matching site that connects organizations to volunteers. For more information, please visit www.dialself.org

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William Anderson, LGBTQ Housing First Case Manager for DIAL/SELF accepting the Cornerstone Award from Dr. Jeffrey Rose, MD, Senior Vice President of Clinical Strategy at Hearst Health. - Photo credit: David Fox, Photographer