

Lancaster County Board Commissioners

555 S 10th St #110

Lincoln, NE 68508

November 1, 2022

Lancaster County Board Members,

I am writing today to request an award of available ARPA funds that will assist us in completing a project that will dramatically impact the capacity of our services as well as support the work of Community Corrections and beyond. As you know St. Monica's has been providing life changing treatment services for women and their children for 58 years. Our gender responsive treatment for Substance Use Disorders and Mental Health meets the unique needs of women coming from a variety of backgrounds and situations and our Project Mother and Child program is the only one of its kind in Lancaster County.

Unfortunately for the last 25 years we have had a wait list for our programs, and the Pandemic hasn't helped reduce that list. Like most programs we were forced to reduce our census to reduce the spread of COVID, which pushed the wait lists even longer. Just prior to the COVID outbreak we had embarked on a Capital Campaign with the goal of renovating existing facilities and also to expand our services by leasing 2 buildings on Victory Campus, (Veterans Hospital Campus) located just behind our facilities on Wedgewood Drive. After negotiating a 20-year lease with Burlington Realty at **no cost**, we continued to fund raise and have surpassed 3 million of our 4 million dollar goal. Our original plan was to achieve our fundraising goal so that we could completely renovate both Veterans facilities, referred to as buildings 6 and 7, and move our Therapeutic Community and Project Mother and Child programs into those buildings on Victory Park campus. Despite the obstacles that COVID presented we have been able to complete needed renovations to our main building at 120 and 105 Wedgewood with Capital funds already raised. We have the architectural drawings completed, the minor asbestos found in buildings 6 and 7 has been remediated, and we are just waiting on the final permit from the City to begin construction on those homes.

We were also recently awarded a new contract from Region V for opening a Halfway House for women. This compliments our plans which is outlined below.

We recently become aware of another very exciting opportunity that will make a huge impact on both our current and long-term goals. A third building located in Victory Park that sits next to buildings #6 and #7 has become available. Building # 5 was originally going to be leased by The Lincoln Area On Aging, but they have changed their plans and will be renovating a different space in Victory Park. In a very short time, we have already negotiated a 20 year **no cost** lease on that building, with St. Monica's being responsible for the renovation costs. We have enlisted Clark Enerson for the entire project with all three buildings, and we will continue to work with BIC for the construction on Victory Park.

This third larger building offers us the ability to expand significantly more. For example, currently Project Mother and Child can accommodate 7 families, building #5 will allow us to serve 10 families and will give us far more room for children's therapy, family therapy, dedicated play rooms and beautiful outdoor play areas. Our Therapeutic Community currently has a capacity of 8 women, and building #5 will allow us to serve 20+ women and provide group rooms, visitation space for their children and families to visit, and beautiful green space. Our existing homes do not have the size to do any of the things described above.

Our hope is to secure additional ARPA funds that will allow us to move forward and renovate the 2 smaller buildings for expanded Step Down Sober Housing and relocate Project Mother and Child and Therapeutic Community to building #5. Each of these changes for the three buildings in Victory Park will best address our wait lists and will reduce the "bottle neck" we experience when women come out of Short Term Residential and we

can't get them into the next critical step, a Therapeutic Community. This project will also greatly expand step down housing which is the #1 need our graduates continually ask us for help with. After spending months getting sober and /or stable in their Mental Health and SUD, if there is no safe and affordable place to live, the risks of relapse are greatly increased. And based on research and our 58 years of experience, we believe there is a distinct need for housing that is gender responsive. For women with significant trauma, it's critical that they have access to safe trauma informed supported housing environment until they are stable. As a graduate recently told me, "I was in a coed program and because of my trauma from a sexual assault, I didn't feel safe to address it with males all around me".

Finally, with this expansion we will be able to assist other community programs who have women who need treatment and/or safe sober housing, which is a critical piece of the puzzle. Community Corrections and Lancaster County Jail are two examples that would greatly benefit from having this capacity issue increased and we would love to partner with them to dedicate one of the facilities for this population. We currently have a successful partnership providing housing for women coming out of corrections.

This project is a Win-Win for the community. Utilizing these funds to expand much needed services in beautiful facilities that are located in this setting with green space, within a safe neighborhood and provided by St. Monica's will be a model project.

We request \$750,000 to support this project. If there are additional funds available, we would be excited to discuss those opportunities as well. I am happy to provide any additional information you might need such as floor plans, a copy of our lease with Burlington Realty, the construction bid on # 6 and #7 etc. I look forward to the possibility of partnering with the County on this exciting opportunity for our community!

**We do not have a bid on building #5 as we are early in the design process with Clark Enerson.*

Thank you so much for your consideration,

Genuinely,

Mary

Mary Barry-Magsamen, CEO