



Public Information

# NEWS RELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 13, 2019

### **Community Partners Join Richland County to Help Displaced Residents**

**(Richland PIO)** – With \$150,000 in funding from Richland County Government, several local community partners put forth plans to assist the more than 400 residents of Allen Benedict Court who had to vacate the apartment complex in January following a deadly gas leak.

Representatives of the organizations attended the Richland County Council meeting on March 5 to give an overview of how they will use the grant funds:

- **HARVEST HOPE FOOD BANK** will serve as collection organization for donated gift cards; collect food, baby supplies, paper products and other related donated items; maintains and monitor a specific Allen Benedict Court Amazon wish list; provides food to community agencies providing hot meals and other supplies to individuals and families still in hotels; provides disaster snack boxes to clients still in hotels; provide “Welcome Home” food boxes for residents when they move into new residences; provide direct services to Allen-Benedict Court residents through its food pantry at 2818 White Horse Road; collaborate with case workers on meeting clients’ needs on an individual and group basis. For more information, contact Harvest Hope at 803-254-4432.
- **RICHLAND COUNTY RECREATION COMMISSION** will host a Resource Fair with several Richland County partners to assist the Allen Benedict Court Community, distributing 100 \$150 Recreation Vouchers for the children of the Allen Benedict Community on Saturday, March 30, 2019 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Adult Activity Center, 7494 Parklane Road. This event is a resource fair for the residents of the Allen Benedict Court Community. Local resource representatives from area businesses and nonprofit organizations will be on site to assist the residents with resources to help increase their social equity. For more information, contact Adairius Williams, Community Outreach Coordinator, at 803-741-7272, ext. 142.
- **RICHLAND LIBRARY** is partnering with the Salvation Army and the Columbia Housing Authority to serve as an ombudsman for the former residents of Allen Benedict Court. The library has a dedicated phone line, 803-391-5704, and will provide individualized, intensive case management, seven days a week to support and empower former Allen Benedict Court

residents. Additionally, the library will also give Allen Benedict Court residents financial assistance to fund reestablishment expenses. This may include new mattresses, pots and pans, dishes, silverware, dressers, couches, rugs, children's toys, bedding, curtains, gas cards for gas and/or food, bus passes, etc. While the library will use funds provided by Richland County or other funders to support this effort, it will not accept individual donations of cash, supplies, or gift cards. Anyone looking to donate to help the residents of Allen Benedict Court, the library asks they give to Harvest Hope or the United Way of the Midlands' established campaigns. For more information, call 803-391-5704 or 803-799-9084.

- **UNITED WAY OF THE MIDLANDS** will administer a relocation assistance fund for residents of Allen Benedict Court who have received a Columbia Housing Authority voucher to relocate to private housing. The relocation fund will assist residents with housing start-up costs including utility and rent deposits. Salvation Army of the Midlands will manage the fund including accepting referrals, qualifying residents and paying vendors. Residents needing assistance should contact Richland Library or the Columbia Housing Authority for a referral. United Way of the Midlands created the fund with a \$15,000 grant and \$5,000 matching grant from BlueCross Blue Shield. The County investment will significantly extend the program. United Way of the Midlands also will provide laundry services to Allen Benedict Court residents temporarily relocated to local hotels. United Way will contract for the laundry service. Residents' laundry will be picked up, cleaned and folded and delivered to residents within 24 hours on a weekly schedule that includes all hotels with Allen Benedict Court residents. The Columbia Housing Authority will assist with the program at hotel sites. For more information, call 803-733-7312 or 803-733-5400.
- **CHRIST CENTRAL MINISTRIES** will provide support to the United Way, Harvest Hope or any other governmental entity. It also has offered its facilities, such as Hope Plaza, for use.

Richland County Council voted unanimously in February to provide funding to assist residents of Allen Benedict Court with day-to-day necessities. All agencies receiving funding to help the residents will be subject to an audit conducted by the County's Budget and Grants Management Department.

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