



Odie Donald, II MBA
Administrator

NEWS RELEASE

Danielle Harris, Public Information Manager
706-564-3460 (cell) dharris@augustaga.gov

**City of Augusta to host inaugural resource fair to connect
community with local services**

AUGUSTA, GA (Jan. 25, 2022) – The City of Augusta is hosting its first community resource fair for the area’s homeless to increase engagement with local health providers and find housing pathways.

The City’s *Bridge the Gap-Community Resource Fair* will be held from 10am-2pm on Friday, Feb. 11, at The Salvation Army Center of Hope, located at 1384 Greene St. Attendees will have the opportunity to take part in a variety of community services, including vaccinations, grooming and hygiene stations, and other valued resources. There will also be food trucks on site providing meals.

“Homelessness is a deeply concerning issue in many cities, and effectively addressing this issue takes a multipronged approach,” said Augusta Mayor Hardie Davis, Jr. “The City of Augusta cannot solve homelessness alone, nor its contributing factors. This is why I am pleased our City has partnered with U.S. Housing and Urban Development, Georgia Department of Public Health, Medical Associates Plus, and the Salvation Army to launch an event where homelessness can be addressed holistically.”

“This partnership represents a tremendous opportunity to provide much-needed support to one of our most vulnerable populations, and a continuation of our collective efforts to create a community response that ensures homelessness in Augusta is rare, brief, and non-recurring” City Administrator Odie Donald II, added.

Hawthorne Welcher, Director of the City of Augusta's Housing and Community Development Department, says the event's focus is to meet residents where they are to connect them with the help they need. Welcher says the event will be like a one-stop shop as residents meet service providers and get signed up for appointments all in one location.

“Events like this resource fair are beneficial to our residents as it allows us to connect the underserved community with resources available to them locally and federally,” said Welcher. “The resource fair also gives the City a great opportunity to work with agencies to provide aid to those who need it the most.”

This event is sponsored by the City of Augusta’s Housing and Community Development Department, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Georgia Department of Public Health, Golden Harvest Food Bank, Medical Associates Plus, The

Salvation Army, Target, AdMax Advertising, Inc., Murphy Auto Group, Augusta Transit, Richmond County Marshal's Office, Augusta-Richmond County Emergency Management, City of Augusta's Human Resources Department, and City of Augusta's Parks and Recreation Department.

"HUD and Health and Human Services announced on April 30, 2021, a partnership to ensure that the national response to COVID-19 delivers equitable, comprehensive care to those experiencing disproportionate impact, including HUD-assisted individuals and households", said Shea Johnson, HUD Georgia Director of Operations. "This partnership with the City of Augusta, Medical Associates Plus, GA Department of Public Health, and the Salvation Army is a natural extension of that partnership as it targets those who are experiencing homelessness. We are proud to work with these stakeholders to assist those who are in dire need during this pandemic by providing critical health services and resources."

J.R. Richards, Chief Executive Office for Medical Associates Plus, and Mike Murphy, owner of Murphy Auto Group, offered similar sentiments.

"Medical Associates Plus is excited to partner with the City of Augusta, HUD, Salvation Army and DPH to bring COVID-19 vaccines and testing to a vulnerable population in those that are homeless," said Richards. "MAP continues to be a major safety net provider of comprehensive healthcare services and other resources for the disenfranchised vulnerable populations of Richmond and surrounding counties, providing 100% access to healthcare and contributing to reducing health disparities. Medical Associates Plus has partnered with the City of Augusta on many fronts and is pleased to continue to serve the community with quality services including the vaccine program".

"Due to the 75% increase in the homeless population in Augusta, compared to the 7% increase statewide in Georgia, Murphy Auto Group is partnering with Augusta Housing and Community Development authorities to promote COVID-19 vaccinations, health screenings, and sanitation kits. Our main goal is to support all initiatives that encourage the wellbeing of all citizens of Augusta" said Mike Murphy, owner of Murphy Auto Group, which includes Miracle Toyota of North Augusta, Miracle Nissan of North Augusta, Miracle Nissan of Augusta and Miracle CDJR.

"Our team at Golden Harvest Food Bank is proud to partner with so many local organizations to provide food and healthcare services to our neighbors in Richmond County," said Amy Breitmann, President and CEO, Golden Harvest Food Bank. "Collaborations like this are what truly make an impact for those struggling with homelessness and hunger."

Media interested in covering this topic should contact Danielle Harris at dharris@augustaga.gov or call 706-564-3460.

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