

# FY 2015 Annual Report

## Arlington County 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness



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- Centralized Access
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- New Homeless Services Center Opens
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2015 was another year of real progress in our efforts to prevent and end homelessness in Arlington, but there are still too many of us without a place to call home.

In the last five years, we've reduced the number of people in shelters or on the streets by more than half. That's the result of a lot of hard work from service providers, a legion of volunteers and great community support along with federal, state and county funding.

### Our Approaches are Working

The "Housing First" model is working. A safe and stable place to live is the first need of those in crisis. Our approach centers on helping individuals and families with permanent housing as rapidly as possible and providing support services to help them keep their homes.

Our new Homeless Services Center, shelters, family homes and safe havens are providing a safe place to stay along with employment and life skills training, mental health and substance abuse counseling, nursing and medical respite as well as meals, showers, laundry, and mail facilities while we help those in need find permanent housing. We've also made fundamental changes to coordinate access to housing and the delivery of services across all providers.

### Our Numbers Are Going Up In the Right Places

We're helping more people than in the past – we're just helping them differently. A closer look at the numbers on

page seven shows that we're moving more people from being homeless to being housed than ever before.

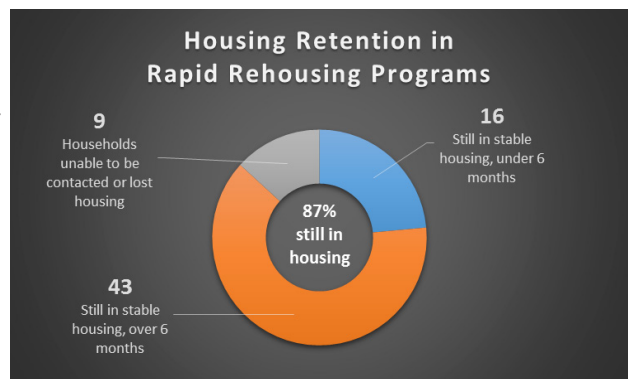
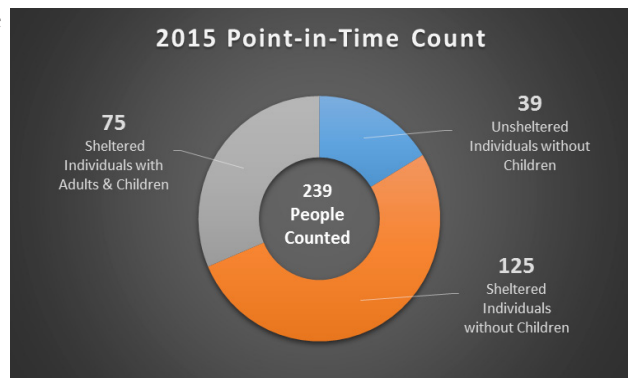
Moving forward, the consortium of housing providers, service providers, county agencies, private sector supporters and community organizations that are the core of our 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness in Arlington are collaborating on new initiatives focused on employment and training, a growing problem of youth homelessness, and a partnership with landlords to help overcome leasing barriers.

### Challenges Remain

We still have many challenges. During the course of the past year more than 1,000 households sought assistance finding or keeping a home and, on any given night, nearly 240 individuals were still in shelter or safe havens or on the streets.

Our success with efforts like the 100 Homes Campaign means that our providers and service agencies are increasingly working with the harder to serve clients – those with more complex issues and barriers to overcome. At the same time, rents and stresses on those with low incomes continue to rise.

The Affordable Housing Master Plan adopted by the County Board this year includes our objective to end home-



lessness in Arlington. This doesn't mean there will never be someone sleeping on a park bench. Personal crises can happen to any of us at any time. It does mean that Arlington will have the housing and services to move those who become homeless back into permanent homes quickly.

We hope to end veteran homelessness by the end of next year. Ending chronic and family homelessness will take a little longer, but – with continued community support – we can do it!

Dave Leibson & Melissa Bondi

Co-Chairs, Arlington 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness

**Ending Homelessness in Our Community: Ready to Jump In?** No matter your interests skills, you can play an important part in helping Arlington residents who are homeless: prepare and serve meals; staff a local shelter or nonprofit; mentor a child, family or individual; contribute financially to a nonprofit provider or to the Arlington Community Foundation Homelessness Prevention Fund. We also have positions available on 10 Year Plan committees. Anyone can join. The following committees have co-chair openings: Housing Committee, Integrated Services Committee and Data & Evaluation Committee.

If you are interested in getting involved with the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness, please contact the Arlington County Homeless Programs Coordinator @ 703-228-1319.



# What We're Doing

## Continuing with a Housing First Approach

Arlington's continuum of care (CoC) partners continue to see positive outcomes from Housing First. Housing First is an approach that centers on providing people experiencing homelessness with housing as quickly as possible – and then providing services as needed. Housing First programs share critical elements:

- A focus on helping individuals, families and veterans access and sustain permanent rental housing as quickly as possible without time limits.
- A variety of services delivered to promote housing stability and individual well-being on an as-needed basis. This includes case management with a special focus on housing issues that may arise such as making timely rent and utility payments and complying with other lease provisions.



While all Housing First programs share these critical elements, program models vary significantly depending upon the population served. For people who have experienced chronic homelessness, there is an expectation that intensive (and often specialized) services will be needed indefinitely.

For most people experiencing homelessness, however, such intensive services are not necessary. Some homeless individuals and families fall into homelessness after a housing or personal crisis that led them to seek help from the homeless assistance system. For these families

and individuals, the Housing First approach is ideal, as it provides them with assistance to find permanent housing quickly and without conditions.

In turn, most clients do best when the stress of living in homelessness

or shelter is alleviated. Once housed, services are highly effective in helping households develop greater stability. Arlington Continuum of Care providers have grown adept at locating housing quickly, working with landlords when barriers exist, and matching service levels to client needs.



## New Homeless Services Center

The new Homeless Services Center opened in October 2015. Center-based programs and services will include:

- Employment and life skills training
- Benefit enrollment
- Mental health and substance abuse counseling and treatment
- Nursing services and medical respite program
- Shelter (dormitory use)
- Meals, shower, laundry and mail facilities

The center features 50 year-round shelter beds, 25 winter hypothermia prevention beds and five medical respite beds.

With its three distinct service areas — shelter, day program and medical respite — the Homeless Services Center is a critical component of the community's efforts to end homelessness. A best-practice model that uses integrated, comprehensive services will facilitate moving homeless persons into permanent housing as quickly as possible.

The County's second year-round shelter for individuals, the Residential Program Center, has also adopted the same goals and strategies as the HSC creating a unified approach to housing individuals in shelter.

# Making Some Fundamental Changes to Our System

A new Centralized Access System (CAS) was launched in 2015 to improve access to services across the entire continuum. The Department of Human Services is now the primary initial contact point for individuals and families who have become homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless. The new approach focuses on matching people, as quickly as possible, with the intervention that will most effectively and efficiently prevent or end their homelessness and lead to stability.

Centralized Access System intervention services include:

## Prevention

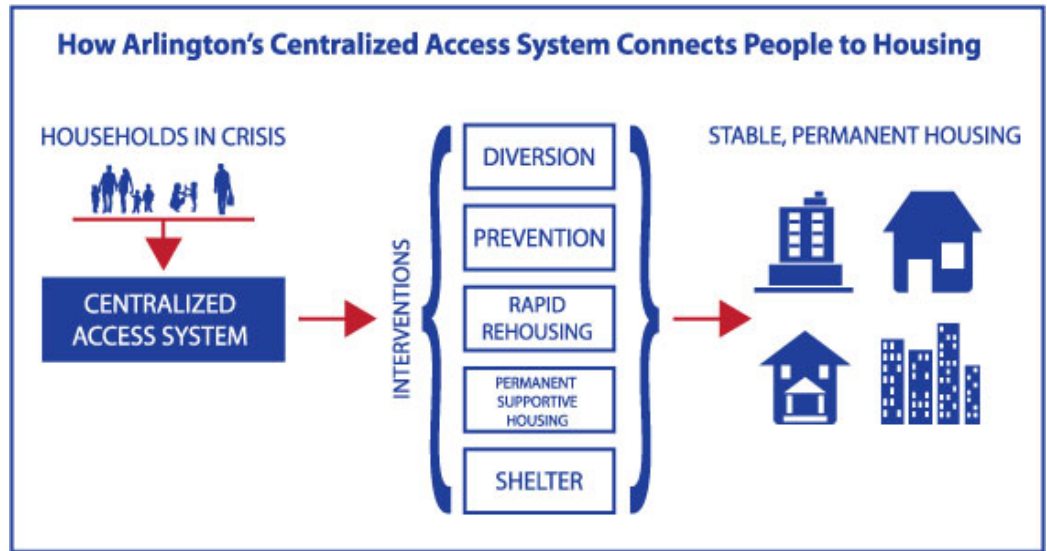
- Short-term rental assistance designed for households where a temporary set-back has occurred (injury, loss of work hours). The assistance will maintain the household's current housing.
- Medium- and long-term rental assistance (3-10 months) for households that need longer term assistance accompanied by supportive services.

## Diversions

- Specialized efforts to identify housing options to include family, friends, co-workers and other natural supports.

## Rapid Re-Housing

- Set of strategies to permanently house homeless individuals and families as quickly as possible



with a level and duration of support that meets the needs of each household.

- Includes rental assistance, flexible funding for security and utility deposits and a range of supportive services.

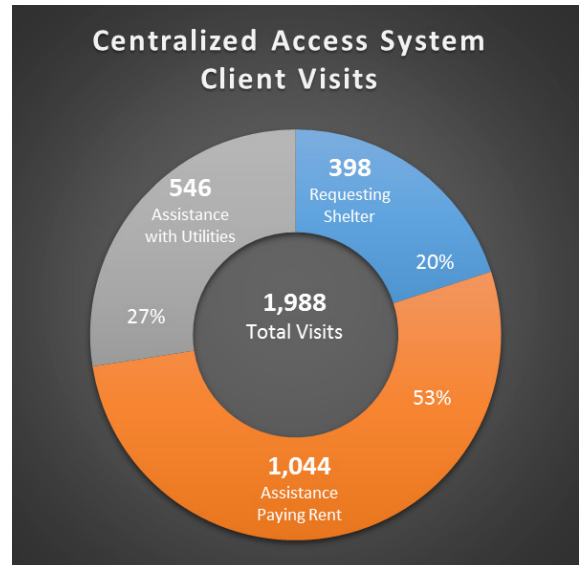
## Permanent Supportive Housing

- A specialized housing program primarily for people with long-term disabilities and who are chronically homeless.

- Includes rent subsidy paid to landlord, plus supportive services.

## Emergency Shelter

- Placement at a community shelter for individuals or families.
- Emergency resource of last resort, for people who are literally homeless and have no other option



to resolve their homelessness.

As part of the CAS restructuring, we introduced a dedicated hotline (703-228-1010) for people in a housing crisis to call 24/7, including after hours, on weekends and on holidays. The hotline received more than 1,800 calls in FY 2015. CAS implementation is ongoing, but early results have been positive.

## Diversions in Action

Jane, a mother of two, came to the Department of Human Services to request a shelter placement after leaving her husband. Jane had never lived on her own before, but she had a job.

The diversion specialist started to explore alternative housing options with Jane. It was determined that staying with a friend was a safe and viable option for Jane's family. While working

toward a permanent housing plan, Jane and her case manager reviewed her financial records and determined that Jane could use money she had accumulated in her savings account to get an apartment -- negating any need for a shelter.

The diversion specialist assisted Jane in filling out her first-ever apartment application and a few days later, Jane was approved. Additionally, the diversion specialist assisted Jane in

*(continued on page 5)*

## Ending Veteran and Chronic Homelessness

Arlington continued to make progress among the chronically homeless and veteran homeless populations. As a follow-on to the successful 100 Homes Campaign, Arlington was selected to participate in the Zero:2016 Campaign to end veteran homelessness by December 2015 and chronic homelessness by the end of 2016. Arlington has housed 17 veterans and 29 people considered chronically

homeless since January 2015, and is on target to end veteran homelessness by the end of the year.

## Helping Domestic Violence Survivors

In FY 2015, the Doorways Safehouse saw a 21% increase in clients served (see table, page 7). Trends at the Safehouse included longer average stays and improved housing stability upon leaving. Doorways piloted a scattered-site program, offering an

increase in capacity and alternate emergency shelter to individuals not best served in its shelter environment (e.g., males, LGBTQ population that may not feel comfortable accessing a setting with limited privacy, families with children with disabilities, and/or individuals with fragile health and compromised immune systems). The two-bedroom scattered site apartment units served four households in the last five months of FY 2015.



## Where We're Going

### Youth Homelessness

Our understanding of the scope and dynamics of youth homelessness is growing. The number of homeless youth (both unaccompanied and in families, and young adults age 18-24) has been rising in recent years, and this population often experiences homelessness differently than “street homelessness.”

Arlington’s new Task Force on Youth Homelessness was created in response to a growing need for services for youth/young adults experiencing homelessness. The task force began meeting in September 2015 following a community consortium presentation in May 2015 that drew attention to this growing issue.

This task force aims to bring together the network of providers working to help these young adults and families succeed. Initial efforts will focus on three key areas:

1. Improving data to quantify both needs and numbers of homeless

youth in Arlington.

2. Building capacity for enhanced, coordinated service delivery and programming.
3. Creating solutions for immediate needs by utilizing our collective resources.

### Partnering with Landlords

Poor credit, poor rental history and criminal background are often major barriers that keep people from being approved for an apartment. When homeless individuals and families are not able to secure housing, they spend more time in shelters. The newly formed Arlington Landlord Partnership is helping low-income individuals and families overcome these barriers to stable housing.

For agreeing to apply alternate screening criteria to clients referred through the partner agencies, landlords receive rapid response to tenant concerns, case management for tenants to help ensure stability, and access to a risk reduction fund for

lost rent or damages in excess of the tenant’s security deposit.

It is truly a “win-win” scenario: homeless individuals and families receive access to housing and landlords receive a greater amount of protection from risk.

### Focus on Employment

A Training and Employment Pilot Program was launched by the 10 Year Plan Service Integration Committee in Spring 2015. With a small grant from the County Community Development Fund, up to 10 individuals will be placed in jobs with a career path and the promise of employment stability in industries such as maintenance, food service, hospitality and aviation and airlines. The program provides opportunities for homeless individuals with long periods of unemployment to intern with employers to gain exposure to the work environment and acquire updated work and personal skills. Participants will receive a weekly stipend and transportation assistance.

*(continued on page 8)*

### Diversion in Action *(from page 4)*

applying for the locally funded Housing Grant subsidy as well as the necessary paperwork to establish child support. Being connected to these resources meant the difference between remaining comfortable or possibly struggling. This process took two months from start to finish, but Jane and her family did not have to enter the homeless system in order to obtain permanent,

safe and stable housing.

On February 20, 2015 Jane signed her lease and picked up keys to her new apartment.

Although successfully housed, Jane contact her case manager a month later to request help with paying her bill – but it turned out she only wanted help in learning how to fill out a check from her checkbook.



# Challenges

## Meeting Complex Client Needs

One emerging trend is that many people now coming for assistance have more complex challenges and barriers to overcome. These include serious mental illness, criminal history, evictions, unemployment, medical conditions and large families. In the coming year, a number of efforts and programs will help address those issues:

- Cross-discipline collaboration through initiatives like 100 Homes and Zero:2016 has brought housing and service providers together to solve problems placing veterans and chronically homeless individuals in permanent housing.
- The new Landlord Partnership will expand housing options for people with significant housing barriers.
- The new medical respite beds at the Homeless Services Center will help clients who need short-term bed rest to recover to a point where they are better able to return to stable housing.
- Doorways' scattered-site shelter

option will continue to offer alternate emergency shelter to individuals not best served in the shelter environment.

- Arlington is also looking at ways to provide ongoing service linkages for households transitioning from rapid rehousing programs to permanent housing. The extension of supports could address problem areas we have identified such as employment retention (resulting from low levels of education/training, childcare and transportation challenges) and immigration and mental health challenges.

## Housing Affordability

From 2000 to 2013 Arlington County lost 13,500 affordable housing units, primarily to rent increases. Arlington's low-income households face the most serious affordability challenges. Many low-income households spend less on food, transportation, utilities and other necessities in order to cover housing costs. Small increases in rents or condo fees can have a major impact on these households' budgets.

Through the three-year Affordable Housing Study, the County evaluated policies; assessed programs and resources; and identified needs and gaps in provisions for affordable housing. In September 2015, the County Board approved an Affordable Housing Master Plan which will guide the County in implementing strategies to make housing affordable to Arlingtonians of all income levels.

## Data

Having reliable data is important for identifying the depth and breadth of homelessness in Arlington as well as for evaluating the effectiveness of our interventions. We have made significant strides in the past few years with the implementation of our system-wide Homelessness Management Information System, which the County and all of its partners use to track clients, services and outcomes. This has increased the accuracy of our data – much of which is presented in this report – but all service providers are continuing to work together to improve data collection to guide our ongoing work.

Larry, a veteran, and his 12-year-old daughter Sarah had been in and out of shelters, motels and housing several times over the past nine years. Due to several job losses and a series of unfortunate events, he was unable to keep stable housing for himself and his daughter. With no support Larry came into DHS seeking assistance for his family. Due to his imminent homelessness, he was directed to the diversion specialist for shelter. All the shelters were full at the time so DHS assisted his family with temporary motel assistance until space at the shelter became available for them. He then moved into the Family Home.

Larry was unemployed, but he searched for jobs to support his family as much as he could. Larry had several barriers to becoming stably housed and employed -- primarily a criminal history, poor credit and multiple evictions. Sarah struggled keeping up with schoolwork, socializing with friends was difficult, and her self-esteem was low.

**Father, Daughter  
Receive the Help  
They Need to  
Bounce Back**

Larry's difficulty staying employed left him feeling hopeless that his family could ever leave shelter. Sarah struggled and engaged in self-harming behavior. Larry and Sarah met with the children's team to reduce risk behaviors and worked on improving Sarah's grades at school. Sarah received individual and family therapy at the shelter, and later on she was connected to longer-term mental health counseling in the community.

The Family Home team assisted Sarah with her schoolwork in the evenings, providing tutoring and a safe space for her to feel comfortable again. Larry received employment coaching, he practiced with staff and volunteers how to present at interviews, and he was able to secure a job after a few attempts. He then began working with the Financial Independence Track (FIT) team.

Larry regularly deposited into escrow, learning how to save for the first time in his life. He was also able to pay off one of

*(continued on page 7)*

## Shelter Programs: Number of People Served

Comparison FY 2013-FY 2015<sup>1</sup>

|   | FY 2013                   | FY 2014      | FY 2015      | 2014-2015 Change |
|---|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|
| <b>Family Shelters</b><br>Freddie Mac Foundation Family Home, Sullivan House  | 155<br>56 HH <sup>2</sup> | 195<br>68 HH | 203<br>68 HH | +4%<br>0% HH     |
| <b>Adult-Only Individual Shelter</b><br>Residential Program Center            | 186                       | 173          | 160          | -8%              |
| <b>Domestic Violence Shelter</b><br>Doorways for Women and Families Safehouse | 72<br>38 HH               | 71<br>40 HH  | 86<br>44 HH  | +21%<br>+10% HH  |
| <b>Emergency Winter Shelter</b><br>A-SPAN Emergency Winter Shelter            | 428                       | 464          | 454          | -2%              |

<sup>1</sup> Counts are unduplicated. <sup>2</sup> HH = households.

Comparison FY 2013-FY 2015<sup>1</sup>

|   | FY 2013                    | FY 2014                   | FY 2015                    | 2014-2015 Change |
|---|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Eviction Prevention</b><br>Clinical Coordination Unit, A-SPAN, VOA-C | 330<br>185 HH <sup>2</sup> | 423<br>237 HH             | 220<br>96 HH               | N/A <sup>3</sup> |
| <b>Eviction Prevention</b><br>Arlington Thrive Carter Jenkinson         | 1,165<br>491 HH            | 1,077<br>451 HH           | 765<br>326 HH              | -29%<br>-28% HH  |
| <b>Rental Assistance</b><br>Arlington Thrive Daily Fund                 | 358<br>197 HH              | 555<br>278 HH             | 482<br>231 HH              | -13%<br>-17% HH  |
| <b>Rental Assistance</b><br>DHS General Relief Emergency (GRE)          | 272 HH                     | 259 HH                    | 191 HH                     | -26%             |
| <b>Rapid Rehousing</b><br>Bridges to Independence, Doorways, A-SPAN     | Not Available<br>68 HH     | 259 <sup>4</sup><br>80 HH | 295 <sup>5</sup><br>122 HH | +14%<br>+52% HH  |
| <b>Permanent Supportive Housing</b><br>DHS, A-SPAN, New Hope Housing    | 179                        | 181                       | 208                        | +15%             |

<sup>1</sup> Counts are unduplicated. <sup>2</sup> HH = households. <sup>3</sup> Numbers included HPRP in years prior to FY 2015. <sup>4</sup> The rapid rehousing number for FY 2014 includes households served with state funds. Previous years did not include households served with state funds. <sup>5</sup> The rapid rehousing number for FY 2015 includes singles served in the A-SPAN rapid rehousing program.

## Outreach and Engagement: Number of People Served

Comparison FY 2013-FY 2015

|  | FY 2013 | FY 2014 | FY 2015 | 2014-2015 Change |
|--|---------|---------|---------|------------------|
| <b>Outreach and Engagement</b><br>A-SPAN Opportunity Place and Street Outreach | 1,011   | 934     | 768     | -18%             |

### Father, Daughter... *(from page 6)*

his many rental debts to help smooth the way for permanent housing. The Family Home team began to notice a positive shift in Larry and Sarah. Doorways was able to locate an affordable apartment for Larry and Sarah, and the landlord was willing to waive the issues presented by his credit and

rental history. Larry received help from Doorways' Home Start program to pay the initial deposit and first month's rent as he continued the lengthy process of working with the Department of Veterans Affairs to access longer-term housing subsidies. Sarah made the honor roll at the end of school year, and the family is now living in their own apartment.

# About the Arlington County Continuum of Care

Arlington County has a core network of interconnected programs and services (called a Continuum of Care, or CoC) to assist people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The CoC includes County government programs/services and non-profit organizations. It provides a foundation for the broader community partnership working toward the shared goals of preventing homelessness before it occurs and returning homeless individuals and families to stable housing as quickly as possible. Arlington Continuum of Care program areas and operating entities:

**Street Outreach and Engagement:** Service workers connect with persons living on the streets, in parks, under bridges and in encampments to help put individuals on the path to stability and housing.

- A-SPAN (Arlington Street People's Assistance Network) operates the street outreach program and Opportunity Place drop-in center

**Homelessness Prevention:** Efforts to prevent homelessness before it occurs are an integral part of the CoC.

These programs provide emergency financial assistance and case management to Arlington residents facing a financial crisis that could lead to eviction.

- Arlington Thrive Carter Jenkinson and Daily Funds
- DHS Clinical Coordination Unit General Relief Fund

Another program provides prevention services that includes short- and medium-term housing stabilization (financial assistance and case management) to households at risk of losing housing.

- Jointly operated by DHS Clinical Coordination Unit, A-SPAN and Volunteers of America-Chesapeake (VOA-C)

**Shelters:** Five Arlington County homeless shelters provide a safe, structured environment for singles and families who are experiencing homelessness.

- Homeless Services Center (A-SPAN)
- Sullivan House Family Shelter (Bridges to Independence)
- Freddie Mac Foundation Family Home and Domestic Violence Program Safehouse (Doorways for Women and Families)
- Residential Program Center year-round shelter for individuals (VOA-C)

**Transitional Housing:** Transitional housing programs provide housing and services to help Arlington families and individuals get ready for permanent housing.

- Residential Program for single mothers and children (Borromeo Housing)
- Independence House transitional housing for individuals recovering from substance abuse (Phoenix Houses of the

Mid-Atlantic)

**Rapid Rehousing:** Rapid rehousing programs move households quickly out of shelter into housing with rental subsidy and case management and support services to help Arlington families gain housing stability for the long term. In these programs, households carry a lease in their own name.

- Adopt-A-Family Rapid Rehousing program (Bridges to Independence)
- HomeStart Rapid Rehousing for families (Doorways for Women and Families)

**Permanent Supportive Housing:** Permanent supportive housing programs provide rental assistance and case management services for households who are homeless and have members with a disabling condition.

- A-SPAN
- Department of Human Services (this program also serves youth transitioning out of foster care)
- New Hope Housing

**Safe Haven:** Supportive housing that serves hard-to-reach homeless persons with severe mental illness who are on the street and have been unable or unwilling to participate in supportive services.

- Arlington's Safe Haven is operated by New Hope Housing

## Where We're Going *(from page 5)*

Arlington Employment Center will provide coaching to help work through any rough patches and enhance the skills being learned on the job. During the job experience, worksite supervisors will share feedback with the participant on their work. The goal is that at the end of the internship, the participant is ready and has the skills to move into a full time position.

The County will continue to partner with D.C. Central Kitchen on a

special culinary training program for individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. About 75 people have completed the program so far, and upwards of 90% have been placed in employment at the end of the 12-week training program.

The program provides participants with culinary skills, workforce readiness and placement, and the opportunity to improve quality of life. Many participants have been placed in positions with the public

schools and have been promoted to managers of cafeteria services in schools in Arlington and Washington, D.C. Another success story is a client who was promoted within the Whole Foods company to chef of the prepared foods section of the store. This is one of the County's most popular training programs. Not only do participants acquire a skill, but they join a family of kindred spirits on a journey to wholeness and self-sufficiency. The next culinary program cycle begins in February 2016.