

BRIGHT FUTURES FOR YOUTH'S SAFE PROGRAM TO OPEN A DROP-IN CENTER TO HELP CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

A long list of free services will be available at the Drop-in Center at 200 Litton Drive in Grass Valley. A grand opening is planned for 10 a.m. Sept. 29

GRASS VALLEY, Calif. – Bright Futures for Youth will open the SAFE Youth Drop-in Navigation Center later this month in Grass Valley, giving children and young adults experiencing homelessness access to much-needed services in a safe and supervised environment.

The SAFE Youth Drop-in Navigation Center is located on the second floor of the Litton Building at 200 Litton Drive in Grass Valley. Bright Futures for Youth and its three programs – The Friendship Club, NEO and SAFE – are in the Litton building.

The Drop-in Center will provide a range of free services, from clothing and grab-and-go food to ensuring access to health care services and counseling.

The Drop-in Center will be open 2-6 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays, and 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. Youth can also schedule an appointment with a case manager at 530-265-4311.

Bright Futures for Youth will host a grand opening for the SAFE Youth Drop-in Navigation Center 10 a.m. to noon Sept. 29. Attendees can RSVP to Cheryl Rubin at cherylr@bffyouth.org or 530-265-4311, ext. 206.

Community leaders and organization officials will discuss the Drop-in Center and the increasing need to help youth experiencing homelessness.

“We were very much aware of the challenges the community faces with an increasing number of children and young adults experiencing housing insecurity, but the demand and need have been even greater than we expected,” said Jennifer Singer, Executive Director of Bright Futures for Youth. “The SAFE program, thanks to our many supporters, is meeting the extraordinary needs of our most vulnerable young residents, and the Drop-in Center is the latest effort in our mission by providing a long list of services in one location.”

Bright Futures for Youth started the SAFE (Stability, Access, Foundation and Empowerment) program in 2019, with a commitment to finding and helping children and young adults faced with housing insecurity in the community.

The SAFE program has already served more than 100 children and young adults experiencing homelessness in Nevada County.

The number of youth experiencing homelessness has increased during the COVID pandemic and an economy teetering on the brink of recession, largely because of the highest inflation rate in 40 years, affecting everything from the cost of gas to housing.

SAFE case managers meet with about 50 youth every week, and an average of five more learn about the program weekly.

"Each young person has a different experience and a unique set of needs," said Aurora Packard, SAFE Program Director. "It's not a one-size-fits-all program, and the Drop-in Center will allow our team to more effectively connect with and determine the needs of youth."

Some may need clothes or a hot meal, while others could require access to health care, counseling and housing. The Drop-in Center will also offer a place to charge smartphones, laundry services, showers, develop new skills, apply for college, financial aid, food programs or even a job.

SAFE partners with numerous government and nonprofit organizations in the community, ensuring children and young adults get the services they need.

"Youth experiencing homelessness are often not aware of the services available," said Phebe Bell, Behavioral Health Director for Nevada County. "The SAFE Drop-in Center opens the door and helps them with the process to access programs and services."

The greatest need for youth accessing the Drop-in Center may be the ability for youth to connect with others who are experiencing homelessness in a safe and supervised environment.

"The Drop-in Center is a safe space, where youth can get what they need, develop friendships and learn that they are not alone," Singer said.

The Drop-in Center for youth is the only one between Sacramento and Reno, and one of the first in a rural community in California.

Construction of the SAFE Youth Drop-in Navigation Center was possible thanks to a \$55,000 grant from Nevada County Behavioral Health, which is providing ongoing program support. The SAFE program also received a three-year \$937,000 state grant from The Center at Sierra Health Foundation, which helps pay for staffing.

Donations from individuals and small-businesses account for a large majority of funding for Bright Futures for Youth. And donations are needed to help with everything from basic needs – such as gas cards and housing – to furnishings and recreational activities.

“We are determined to make homelessness a temporary experience for youth in the community,” Singer said. “And the Drop-in Center is a critical piece to a rather complex issue.”

About Bright Futures for Youth

Bright Futures for Youth is a nonprofit committed to making a life-changing difference for children and young adults in Nevada County. Bright Futures for Youth – created by the merger of The Friendship Club and NEO Youth Center in 2020 – has three programs: The Friendship Club, founded in 1995; NEO, founded in 2008; and SAFE, launched in 2019 to help youth experiencing homelessness. Bright Futures for Youth focuses on health and wellness, healthy relationships, goal setting, self-awareness, self-sufficiency and community connectedness. For more information, visit www.bffyouth.org or Facebook at Facebook.com/BrightFuturesforYouth.