



Unity Care Group, Inc.
"Creating Healthier Communities"

Media Contact
Development
Department
Unity Care Group, Inc.
(408) 971-9822

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Home to Help Foster Children Move On

Salinas, Calif., (November 12th, 2003) - One in four foster children in Monterey County who leave their foster homes end up homeless within three years, a 2002 Monterey County census estimates.

To offset that number, Santa Clara-based Unity Care Group has started a housing program in Salinas for former foster children beginning life on their own.

"It's going to fill a critical need for affordable housing for a group of young adults from our community that would likely be homeless or in substandard housing without it," said Julie Ackron, living coordinator for the Monterey County Social Services Department. In about a month, a 2,000-square-foot, \$219,000 house on Partridge Place in north Salinas will become a temporary home for six men and women, ages 18 through 20. The young adults can stay at the home until they find housing of their own, or until they turn 21, whichever comes first.

The men and women, separated by gender, will be paired in three of the house's bedrooms. A fourth bedroom will be for a supervising adult.

"A house monitor will be here at all times to make sure there is a safe environment," said Jese Wiggins, Unity Care Group's residential director.

The young residents will undergo a combination of individual and group classes.

They'll get job training, learn how to manage their money, study nutrition, and even get tips about using public transportation, said Rhonda Staton, the transitional housing program's case manager.

The residents are expected to abide by firm rules. Besides no alcohol or drug use, the young adults are expected to work full-time, go to school full-time, or support themselves while going to school part-time, Wiggins said.

The residents will be asked to contribute whatever money they can for rent.

They must leave the home by the time they are 21 years old.

Unity Care Group also has two transitional houses in Santa Clara County, where more than a dozen young adults have successfully graduated from the program, Wiggins said.

Unity would eventually like to establish another home in the Salinas area, he said.

Although the young residents won't move in for about four weeks, Ackron said that five of the six beds have already been accounted for.

"Up to this point, we have had no housing programs for youth who have (gotten too old for foster care)," Ackron said, "and only small pilot projects for youth ages 16 to 18. This is really a first for our foster youth."

ABOUT UNITY CARE GROUP

Founded in 1992, Unity Care Group, Inc. is a community-based non-profit multi-service youth and family development agency. Founded with the goal of developing educational and social programs to enrich the lives of at-risk youth, our mission is to provide quality youth and family programs for the purpose of creating healthier communities through lifelong partnerships. For more information contact the Development Department at (408) 971-9822 or visit us at www.unitycare.org.