



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Make Change With Spare Change: New Donation Boxes at Airport to Help Fight Homelessness in Milwaukee County

County Executive Chris Abele introduces new donation boxes at Mitchell Airport, where travelers can donate to support Milwaukee County's Housing First endowment

MILWAUKEE, Tuesday, July 10, 2018 – Travelers using Milwaukee's Mitchell Airport can take the spare change out of their pockets and put it to work fighting homelessness, thanks to four new donation boxes installed this week, Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele announced today.

The new boxes, located outside and past the security checkpoints at Concourses C and D, are in place to collect donations in support of the County's Housing First endowment. Passengers who are emptying change from their pockets as they head through security can opt to donate it instead.

"These boxes reflect a creative, collaborative approach that is necessary for us to tackle some of the County's biggest issues," said Abele. "We've been able to dramatically cut the number of homeless residents in our County in the last three years, but we still have more work to do.

"I'm hopeful that this will make a real difference in our community. Some spare change from passengers can add up to making big changes for people in our County," he added.

The project involved partnership from the Milwaukee County Housing Division, Greater Mitchell International Airport (GMIA) and the County Board of Supervisors, who in May approved changes to an ordinance that had prohibited solicitation at the airport in order to permit installation of the boxes.

"Our mission in Milwaukee County is not just to provide services, but to improve lives," said Sup. Marcella Nicholson, who chairs the Economic and Community Development Committee that originally heard the proposal. "Helping connect people with housing is something we all should be part of, and I'm excited we have this opportunity to involve more of our community in the critical effort to fight homelessness."

Housing Division Administrator James Mathy came across the idea for the donation boxes while researching avenues to raise private funds in order to preserve the momentum of the County's homelessness initiatives. Denver International Airport placed donation containers at security lines, with all proceeds supporting the city's program to address homelessness, Denver's Road Home. That initiative raised \$282,722 in three years. The County hopes to replicate their success at GMIA.

"It's one thing to end chronic homelessness in Milwaukee County, which we're on track to do. It's something else entirely to establish a funding source to make sure it never comes back and ensure no one is sleeping on the streets," said Mathy. "That's what this is. One hundred percent of these funds for the Housing First endowment will

go to homeless services. Every penny donated is going to support the people who need it.”

Airport Director Brian Dranzik said, “The spare change collectors are a great way for Mitchell Airport to support and improve the community that supports us. I will join my fellow MKE travelers in contributing spare change before going through security on my next flight!”

While the County is on track toward its goal of ending chronic homelessness by this fall, those who don’t fit the definition of chronically homeless also require assistance. A majority of the new funding to combat homelessness has come from Milwaukee County in the past few years, but additional resources are needed.

The Housing First endowment, which is held by the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, is designed to augment County funding with private donations and amplify the fight against homelessness.

“Greater Milwaukee Foundation donors have a long history of providing for the basic needs and dignity of individuals and families. This collaborative effort to end chronic homelessness is an extension of that commitment,” said Foundation President and CEO Ellen Gilligan. “As individuals donate to the Housing First endowment – including through these creative airport containers – the Foundation will ensure this permanent resource continues to grow and serve the people of Milwaukee County.”

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