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Marin Organizing Committee Leaders Gain Candidate Commitments on Shelter, Housing

On Thursday, May 15th, over 200 leaders of the Marin Organizing Committee will gather for an “Accountability Session” with Susan Adams and Damon Connolly, candidates for District 1 Marin County Supervisor.

Not a forum or a debate, this action is focused on gaining concrete commitments from the candidates to work with MOC around the organization’s collective agenda. Front and center is the Supervisors’ support for a permanent home for the REST program.

Created with support from MOC seven years ago, the Rotating Emergency Shelter Team (REST) program operates during five winter months, housing and feeding 40 men at rotating congregations—as well as 20 women who are housed at the County Wellness Center and served by the congregations.

MOC wants to see the REST program run year-round.

“I just got a new job,” said Raquel DeGloria, a REST guest, “but since April 15th I have no place to do basic things like plug in my cell phone and iron my clothes for work.”

“We can and must do better,” said Patti Breitman of Gan Halev, who volunteers with the Homeless Help Desk at the St Vincent de Paul Society of Marin, “It is heartbreaking to tell people there is no place to go after REST closes each year.”

At the action, MOC leaders will be briefed on the progress of MOC’s meetings with local mayors and town council members to garner support for expanding the REST program. “We are building momentum,” declared Gail Dorph of Congregation Kol Shofar, who will conduct the briefing.

“This is a county-wide issue and every city and town must be part of the solution,” said Pat Langley of St Anselm Catholic Church, “But we are looking to our Supervisors to take the lead.”

“We want to make sure our next District 1 Supervisor is a champion for REST,” said Meredith Parnell of Congregation Rodef Sholom.

Both Vice Mayor Connolly and incumbent Supervisor Adams will be asked to commit to taking the lead on securing the necessary funding to expand the 5-month emergency shelter program to 365 days per year.

Candidates will also be asked for their support of expanding housing options for families and seniors in District 1.

“If my wife and I moved here today, we would never be able to buy our home on two teachers’ salaries,” said Keith Lester of Community Congregational Church Tiburon, who lives in East San Rafael.

“Two of my Terra Linda neighbors have left Marin in the past year because they can no longer afford to live here,” said Diane Doubleday of Congregation Rodef Sholom, “Affordable housing isn’t just about ‘them,’ it’s about ‘us.’”

The real work with these candidates will begin after the June election.

“MOC doesn’t endorse candidates,” said Lynn Bauer of Fairfax Community Church, “Our goal is to have a relationship with whomever is elected, and commitments we can hold them accountable to.”

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The Marin Organizing Committee is a broad-based organization comprised of congregations and non-profits organizing to strengthen institutions and build relational power to shape public policy for the common good across Marin County.