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City to partner with JMU, Open Doors on temporary homeless shelter

HARRISONBURG, Va. – The City of Harrisonburg, working with James Madison University and area nonprofit Open Doors, will designate Godwin Hall as a temporary overnight emergency shelter for individuals who are homeless.

The shelter will operate using the same current guidelines as Open Doors, the seasonal shelter that operates during the winter months, and only be open during the evening and overnight hours. It will officially open the evening of Monday, March 30, and City and JMU officials will reassess how long it will operate as needed. Officials with Open Doors will manage the shelter in the evenings in cooperation with JMU’s Godwin building staff.

“We are very thankful for our partners in the community who have come together to support people in need in Harrisonburg during this difficult time for many of us,” Harrisonburg City Manager Eric D. Campbell said. “James Madison University did not hesitate to answer the call of supporting our community, and we are incredibly grateful to have their partnership in this effort. Relationships such as the one between JMU and the City of Harrisonburg are vital in making our community such a supportive place for all.”

City staff will put social distancing requirements in place for the temporary emergency shelter. The ban on gatherings of 10 or more people does not apply to shelter facilities, though the City will require a six-foot minimum space be kept between all sleeping arrangements.

“We are pleased to be able to help support some of the most vulnerable members of our community during this challenging time,” said JMU President Jonathan Alger. “Open Doors provides a vital service to people who would otherwise have no place to go, and we’re thankful to be able to partner with the City of Harrisonburg to support that important mission. At JMU we believe in addressing critical societal needs, and we are proud to answer the call to provide safe and stable shelter for those in need.”

Transportation to the shelter will be provided by the Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation. Individuals needing transportation to the shelter should still assemble at the Turner Pavilion beside City Hall in the evenings.

The City of Harrisonburg is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 54,000 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is available online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.



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