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PRESS RELEASE

New Avenues for Youth launches Oregon's first ever housing for LGBTQ homeless youth

PORTLAND, OREGON: 8.21.2015 – New Avenues for Youth is launching Oregon's first ever housing program specifically for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. The housing program, which opens in the fall, is the latest addition to New Avenues' comprehensive services aimed at meeting the needs of vulnerable, underserved youth. This exciting new opportunity was made possible through strategic investments from Multnomah County and REACH CDC, and will allow New Avenues to expand their LGBTQ-specific services offered through their SMYRC (Sexual and Gender Minority Youth Resource Center) program.

Research shows that while LGBTQ youth represent 7% of the overall youth population in the U.S., they represent up to 40% of all youth experiencing homelessness. The primary reason cited for homelessness among LGBTQ youth is family rejection, and research shows that many youth are kicked out of their homes because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In terms of solution, a recent survey among service providers ranked housing as the top need for LGBTQ homeless youth. King, a youth involved with SMYRC agrees, "A home that I can call my own is all I have ever wanted." When asked what LGBTQ youth-specific housing would mean, King replied "It's about knowing I am going to a place every night where I am going to be safe, warm, protected and respected. As a community we all deserve it."

New Avenues' program will provide housing for 4-6 youth and be based on the Oxford model, in which participants live in a shared house that is democratically run by the youth. This same model has proven successful with New Doors, a housing program New Avenues launched last year for former foster youth experiencing homelessness. To qualify for the LGBTQ-specific housing, youth must be experiencing homelessness and be referred by New Avenues' SMYRC program.

"Our new housing program is about more than four walls and a roof for LGBTQ homeless youth," says New Avenues for Youth's Executive Director, Sean Suib. "These youth are not just experiencing high rates of homelessness, they are often targeted because of who they are and how they identify. We feel it is crucial to offer housing that provides a safe, supportive space, includes case management support from SMYRC staff, and helps create the community youth want and need to realize their potential. We're grateful to partner with Multnomah County and REACH and look forward to opening the house soon."

"REACH is excited to grow this relationship with New Avenues for Youth," says Dan Valliere, CEO of REACH CDC. "This partnership advances REACH's goal of creating more inclusive communities since it will create housing for LGBTQ youth in Inner SE Portland, in close proximity to many educational, economic and social opportunities. REACH is pleased to combine its experience developing and managing housing with New Avenues for Youth's innovative service model and success addressing youth homelessness."

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About New Avenues for Youth

New Avenues for Youth takes a complete approach to addressing youth homelessness and its root causes, delivering support and resources that enable foster, at-risk, and homeless youth aged 14-24 to overcome their barriers and realize their potential. For more information about New Avenues for Youth, visit www.newavenues.org