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Editor’s Note: Restore Hope’s Jeff Jaynes will be available at 2:45 p.m. today for interviews during a virtual media availability.

To join, use this link: https://zoom.us/j/99504496635?pwd=RDFjTm9aVkJxZVRHUVB5WVQ1cnFkdz09

Emergency Rental Assistance Program To Suspend New Applications After $33.7 Million in Funds Distributed

Funds will continue to be distributed to applicants; additional rent, utility and financial help resources are available

Wednesday, Jan. 26, 2021 (Tulsa, OK) – After administering $33.7 million in rent and utility assistance through one of the United States’ first successful deployments of an Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), Restore Hope Ministries, the program’s lead administrator in northeast Oklahoma, will suspend new applications starting Sunday, January 30, to ensure all requested assistance is aligned with the program’s funding.

During this time, Restore Hope will continue to process all current applications until contracted allocations from ERA1 and ERA2 have been expended. The city, county and state were awarded $9.5M, $6M and $166M respectively in ERA2 funds. Restore Hope will continue to monitor distributions and funding availability; if additional funding becomes available, a portal will be opened to accept new applications.

“We are grateful that Tulsa has such a well-equipped and dedicated organization to distribute this funding and navigate the immense need for rental support throughout this pandemic,” Mayor G.T. Bynum said. “Because of the close-working relationships among the State, City and County governments, we were able to leverage a strong partnership with Restore Hope in service to our citizens. Working together, this collaborative effort kept families in their homes and helped stabilize eviction numbers. I am very grateful for everyone who has participated in this important initiative.”

“Tulsa County is proud of the incredible effort to get these funds to the families who need it,” Tulsa County Commission Chair Karen Keith said. “Keeping families in their homes has been a top priority for Tulsa County throughout the pandemic, starting with CARES programs in 2020. Nearly two years later, Tulsa County and the region are in a much better place having avoided thousands of evictions. We’re thankful for the ongoing partnership with the City, State, Restore Hope Ministries and others to avoid cascading tragedies that often begin with evictions.”
To date, the program has helped thousands of people apply and receive critical assistance during the pandemic. More than 7,400 unique households and 3,700 landlords have utilized the funds. The average amount of funding is $4,500 in rental assistance per household.

“It has been our honor to help thousands of families with millions of dollars in rent assistance over more than 18 months,” said Rev. Jeff Jaynes, executive director of Restore Hope. “We hear stories every day about the life-changing impact this program has made for our neighbors in need. We knew this program was temporary when it started, but we are excited for the ways we have been able to help these families and look forward to next steps working together with local partners to find new ways to help our neighbors move toward a better day to come.”

In addition, Restore Hope is launching a new partnership with Tulsa Responds to aid with applicant communication. The organization will launch a call center along with texting, online chat and email support for applicants and others in need of assistance. Tulsa Responds will help manage the inflow of inquiries and help applicants finalize their documentation to speed up processing. They can also connect people to additional resources.

While new ERAP applications are suspended, individuals and families in need of rent and utility assistance still have options. Details about these resources are available on Restore Hope’s website (https://www.restorehope.org/covid19-resource-update/). Resources include:

- Financial Empowerment Center
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Tulsa Social Services Hub
- Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma
- Housing Stability Partners
- A Way Home for Tulsa

Note: Prior to the pandemic, Restore Hope provided rental assistance on a much smaller scale ($305,000 in 2018-19 was the largest year prior to COVID-19 which is just 1% of the funds distributed since COVID). After all funds from ERAP have been distributed, Restore Hope will modify the old program with processes and lessons learned through ERAP and continue to provide rental assistance. The amount of funds Restore Hope will distribute in the future will depend on funding resources. When the new version of the original Restore Hope rental program is launched, details will be distributed.

About Restore Hope | restorehope.org
Restore Hope has played an instrumental role in preventing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since May 2020, the agency has provided more than $38 million in rent and bill payments for 7,500 families in Tulsa County. Funding for this critical program was made possible by generous support from the Tulsa Area COVID-19 Response Fund (through the Tulsa Area United Way and Tulsa Community Foundation), federal CARES Act funds from the State of Oklahoma, the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, and donations from local foundations and individuals. ERAP funding in 2021 was made possible with partnerships with the City of Tulsa, Tulsa County and the State of Oklahoma.