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Christie Administration Announces \$97,230 Grant to Community Hope to Support Transitional Housing for Veterans

Lyons, N.J. – As part of the Christie Administration’s second annual Season of Service, State Treasurer Andrew Sidamon-Eristoff visited the VA Health Care Campus in Lyons today to announce a \$97,230 Shelter Support Grant to Community Hope of Parsippany.

The funds will be used to rehabilitate space for veterans at the Hope for Veterans Transitional Housing Program in Building 53. Community Hope runs the program, which provides housing and support services to veterans who are homeless and struggling with mental illness.

The facility has 95 beds, including six for women, and serves veterans of conflicts ranging from Afghanistan to Vietnam as well as veterans who did not serve in active combat. The program helps veterans get their lives back on track by providing housing and support services for up to two years. More than 600 veterans have graduated from the program since it was launched in 2004 to treat depression, post traumatic stress disorder and other mental illness.

The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) awards Shelter Support grants annually. This year, the DCA is providing \$4,029,059 to Community Hope and 27 other nonprofit and local government agencies operating emergency homeless shelters and transitional housing facilities located throughout New Jersey.

The grants create new emergency shelter beds, abate code violations, address life safety issues in emergency shelters and transitional housing facilities, support existing shelter beds, and purchase equipment, furnishings and vans. The result is improved living conditions for the homeless, victims of domestic violence and military veterans.

The shelters and transitional housing facilities receiving Shelter Support grants are expected to assist more than 3,000 households over the next year. Funding for the grants comes from the State and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. They are administered through DCA's Division of Housing and Community Resources.

Sidamon-Eristoff joined J. Michael Armstrong, Community Hope's CEO, and Kenneth Mizrach, Director of the VA New Jersey Health Care System, in announcing the grant. The money will be used to replace worn carpeting in the building with more-durable wood flooring. The State has awarded four Shelter Support grants to Community Hope since 2003.

Along with providing housing and therapy for mental illness and addiction, the Hope for Veterans program helps veterans reintegrate into society by providing them with a job coach, a computer lab, healthcare and recovery services, transportation, free legal aid, and help in securing affordable housing.

"Helping veterans get back on their feet at a time of personal crisis is a small way of acknowledging the debt we owe them for the sacrifices they made to keep us safe," Sidamon-Eristoff said.

"The State has been an essential partner throughout the eight-year history of this program," J. Michael Armstrong, Community Hope CEO, said. "The first Shelter Support grant enabled us to furnish the program and open the doors in 2004. Since then, the State's grants have made it possible to acquire vans to transport veterans to medical and other appointments, and maintain and improve our 95-bed facility."

This year's Season of Service began on Thanksgiving Eve with Governor Chris Christie, First Lady Mary Pat Christie, Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno, State Treasurer Sidamon-Eristoff and 20 other Cabinet officials distributing Thanksgiving dinners to Hurricane Sandy victims at 19 Lowe's locations

around the state. In last year's Season of Service, Cabinet members participated in approximately 60 events across the state — from serving Meals on Wheels to shut-ins and stocking food pantries to stuffing care packages for military service members overseas and writing holiday letters to troops.

Governor Christie has emphasized the importance of community service since his inaugural in 2010. Today, approximately 1.5 million New Jerseyans contribute about 170 million hours of service each year, bringing a positive influence to neighborhoods and communities throughout the Garden State through local groups, houses of worship and civic organizations.