

# Support program expands services in North Mason

By Molly Walsh

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North Mason Resources provides services as diverse as the situations of the clients served.

Occupying a former medical building and housing several agencies under one roof in Belfair, North Mason Resources is expanding those services by introducing the Foundational Community Supports (FCS) program.

Administered by Amerigroup, the statewide FCS program enables nonprofits to work one-on-one with eligible clients to find housing and employment.

The issues North Mason Resources clients face are often multi-faceted, and the organization's menu of services includes immediate needs and long-term support, including hygiene products, veteran services and to mental health counseling.

"That's what we're really about here, is helping people," said Jessica Lea, coordinated entry



Foundational Community Supports is a statewide program new to North Mason Resources. FCS in Belfair will enable North Mason Resources staff to further help clients with housing and employment needs. *Herald photo by Molly Walsh*

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# Support: More individual attention

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specialist at North Mason Resources. "Because it doesn't matter who you are, where you come from, what your problem is, what we want is to help. We want to make things better."

Housing and employment support already account for a significant portion of the services provided in North Mason Resources' workload. The addition of the FCS program is a supplement to the organization's housing and employment programs already in place. To qualify for FCS, applicants must qualify for Medicaid. Other factors for qualification include chronic homelessness or frequent stays in adult residential care.

Current housing and employment programs that the non-profit uses mainly focus on financial aid for qualified clients, but don't allow staff ample time to sit down with clients for personal support. The new program will allow North Mason Resources staff more time with clients and enable more personal assistance for paperwork, such as rental applications and resume work.

"We have lot of clients that are eligible for it that we're already working with," said Lea. "It's just this way, we are able

to utilize the case management funds that the program provides in order to better support our clients."

The FCS will supplement the already implemented Rapid Rehousing program. That program aids with housing relocation, stabilization and financial assistance for families and individuals who are homelessness.

"It has a very specific goal," said Lea. "Whereas, with the FCS, it's not about getting them off the streets, getting them into a place as fast as you can, fill out applications and you're done. It's more of, let me hold your hand, walk you through this process. I'm here for you to help you understand what's going on and to let you know what services are available."

The aim of the housing portion of Foundational Community Supports is for clients to find stable, affordable, independent housing and in the process, providing more individual attention to clients. This support includes longer appointments with a case manager where clients can set goals, learn how to sign a lease, find housing and practice independent-living skills.

Expanding on North Mason Resources' employment services, the support program also allows

North Mason Resources staff to spend more time with clients seeking permanent employment and help clients increase their employability. The support program can give time for the non-profit's staff to assist with job applications, creating resumes and cover letters, and connecting clients with further education and training.

Another advantage is that the new program expands North Mason Resource's reach — it goes beyond Mason County's border. North Mason Resources is the only social service organization of its kind in North Mason, and now it will give South Kitsap County clients that same attention.

Steve Abels, the director of North Mason Resources, said the Foundational Community Supports has no geographical boundaries, unlike other programs housed under North Mason Resources.

"Anybody that walks in here, whether you're homeless, whether you're a veteran, whether you have domestic violence, we treat everyone exactly the same," said Abels. "You're going to get some water, you're going to get some compassion and by the time you leave, if you're not laughing, we haven't done our job."

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