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OUTMEMPHIS

OUTMemphis' Metamorphosis Project Groundbreaking

Memphis, TN, March 15, 2019: OUTMemphis announced this week that they will break ground on their Youth Emergency Center, which will serve as Memphis's only LGBTQ specific emergency shelter and the only drop-in center in the city that serves youth experiencing homelessness. The Center's response to the absence of services for LGBTQ young adults in the region, the Metamorphosis Project is a holistic, wrap-around approach to helping LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness gain independence. five years ago, OUTMemphis' programs for young people were continually overwhelmed by youth contacting the center seeking emergency housing services. "One night, I received three calls in an hour from youth across the state looking for housing services. That very night, we decided enough was enough. We needed to do something drastic to serve our kids," says Stephanie Reyes, who launched OUTMemphis' Youth Services programs and has spearheaded all aspects of the Metamorphosis project, and currently serves as the organization's Director of Development. "For years, LGBTQ youth in Memphis have had to endure shelters that were not safe, free or welcoming. Now we will have a space of our own, so our youth can not only survive but thrive," says Reyes. LGBTQ young people ages 18-24, who make up 40% of youth experiencing homelessness, are at increased risk of the long-term consequences of housing instability.

After piloting possible solutions, including host families and hotel vouchers, OUTMemphis began pursuing the The Metamorphosis Project, our long-term solution to this issue. The Metamorphosis Project includes three arms of care: Youth Emergency Services (YES), Rapid Re-Housing, and The Youth Emergency Center. YES includes hygiene supplies, food, clothes, bus passes, case management and more. Rapid Re-Housing, which the organization began providing in 2017, provides participants with one year of rental assistance alongside guidance on renting your first home. The final arm is the shelter, which OUTMemphis believes will have the most significant impact. In addition to hosting youth services staff, workshops, hygiene services, and case management, the Metamorphosis Center will solve the critical gap between the moment a young adult contacts OUTMemphis and our ability to link to longer term housing.

"This space will be the first and only drop-in center and shelter for youth in Memphis; we will unite the community through education, social groups, connections to our food pantry, hygiene care, health care, and emergency housing. This will be the city's first chance to change the lives of those most vulnerable," says Stephanie Bell, Youth Services Manager at OUTMemphis. According to the Community Alliance for the Homeless 2018 Point-in-Time/Youth Count, 57% of youth utilize emergency shelters and 43% use transitional housing. In Shelby County, 51% of unaccompanied youth are 18-24, the critical age range that the Metamorphosis Project focuses on.

Molly Quinn, Executive Director of OUTMemphis, says, "40% of youth experiencing homelessness in the US identify as LGBTQ, many as a result of family conflict, and the consequences of homelessness can have permanent consequences on young people, including increased risk of mental and physical harm, sexual abuse and exploitation, HIV, addiction, social stigma, and discrimination.

For Immediate Release

OUTMemphis is proud to lead the charge in providing this lifesaving space, among less than 20 shelters for LGBTQ young people nationwide. The Memphis community has supported these efforts since they were first piloted nearly five years ago – we hope to see that support continue as the shelter opens and expands.”

The Memphis community helped make this dream a reality. A large matching grant was offered by the Assisi Foundation in 2017 and was matched by the Plough Foundation for the capital needed to build the facility. Other individuals and groups such as Mystic Krewe of Pegasus, Friends of George’s and Manna House were also major contributors. “It showed us that we were not the only people in this city to see this need and want to help. From the moment it was announced, the Metamorphosis Project has been supported by the Memphis LGBTQ community and our allies. People rallied together to make this happen, and we expect to see that significant support continue as the emergency shelter begins operations and, hopefully, expands,” says Reyes. The Metamorphosis building will start with four beds, a classroom, meeting and office space, a kitchen, laundry, storage, and parking.

For more information about OUTMemphis, please contact Martavius Hampton as the media contact representative

OUR MISSION: OUTMemphis empowers, connects, educates and advocates for the LGBTQ community of the Mid-South.

OUR VISION: LGBTQ individuals live in a world where everyone has equal rights, and is safe, respected and celebrated.