

MEDIA ALERT



Contact

Dan D'Ippolito
207-775-0026 x1116
communications@preblestreet.org

GRAND OPENING OF PORTLAND'S 3rd HOUSING FIRST PROGRAM Preble Street and Avesta Housing Celebrate Permanent Housing for 30 Formerly Chronically Homeless People

PORTLAND, ME (September 7, 2017) — On **Tuesday, September 12 at 10am** Avesta Housing and Preble Street celebrate Portland's third "housing first" program, Huston Commons. The apartment building is now home to 30 formerly homeless individuals with chronic health challenges.

"The men and women at Huston Commons have not known stability or security for much of their lives," said Mark Swann, Preble Street Executive Director. "But in this supported environment tenants no longer have to deal with the stress and danger of the streets and begin to hope, to heal, to work on recovery, and create community. Even just after a month, you can see—often literally—what a difference a home makes."

Like Logan Place and Florence House which Preble Street and Avesta Housing opened in 2005 and 2010, respectively, **Huston Commons will change and sometimes save the lives of the tenants**, who include:

- 3 veterans
- 8 women
- 12 people who have been living and sleeping outside for years
- 13 people who were "long-term stayers" in the local shelter system, having spent thousands of nights at emergency shelters

"Portland's affordable housing and homeless crisis is as challenging as we have ever seen. Huston Commons will change 30 lives, more than any other housing initiative this year," said Avesta Housing President & CEO, Dana Totman.

In addition to helping vulnerable people and making a demonstrable difference in the city's overcrowded emergency shelters, **Huston Commons saves the community money**. As has been proven over and over again, "housing first"—permanent housing with supportive services—is cheaper than the endless cycle of shelters, emergency rooms, jails, detox programs that chronically homeless people endure year after year. **Housing first is the most humane and cost-effective solution to chronic homelessness.**

Developed and owned by Avesta Housing, Huston Commons operates in partnership with Preble Street and Portland Housing Authority. Avesta Housing manages the building, and Preble Street provides on-

site staffing, including social work services for tenants. Portland Housing Authority provides project-based rental assistance, which allows tenants to limit their rent payments to 30% of their income, while HUD funds cover the balance.

Each fully-furnished efficiency apartment is highly insulated and features water-conserving fixtures and features, a high-efficiency heating system, low or no-VOC paints and materials, and Energy Star-qualified appliances, lighting, and fixtures.

Huston Commons, located near Morrill's Corner, was named for Steve Huston, a former Preble Street employee who experienced and overcame homelessness and who was an eloquent and forceful advocate for housing first. As Steve said, "We all deserve the dignity of ... a home."

What: Huston Commons Grand Opening

Where: Huston Commons, 72 Bishop Street, Portland, Maine, 04103

When: Tuesday, September 12, 2017

10am: Coffee and donuts

10:15am: Program

- **Ethan Strimling**, Mayor, City of Portland
- **Michael Sauschuck**, Chief of Police, City of Portland
- **Stephanie & Steven Huston**, children of Steve Huston
- **Mark Swann**, Executive Director, Preble Street
- **Dana Totman**, President & CEO, Avesta Housing

10:45am: Apartment tours

Interviews with Huston Commons tenants are available upon request.

Preble Street is a nonprofit social work agency serving the most vulnerable people in Maine since 1975 through innovative, best-practice, client-centered programs that respond to and prevent hunger and homelessness. In addition to the largest emergency food service program in northern New England, Preble Street operates 14 low-barrier programs throughout Maine providing 24/365 services for individuals and families living in poverty, including homeless youth, women, veterans, and victims of human trafficking, driven by its mission to meet urgent needs, empower people to move beyond the crises in their lives, and advocate for solutions to homelessness, hunger, and poverty. www.PrebleStreet.org

Avesta Housing is a nonprofit affordable housing provider with over 40 years of experience as a leader in affordable housing development and property management in southern Maine and New Hampshire. The organization is headquartered in Portland, Maine and currently has more than 80 properties and 2,200 apartments in its portfolio. Avesta's mission is to improve lives and strengthen communities by promoting and providing quality affordable homes for people in need. Its five areas of focus are advocacy, development, property management, home ownership, and assisted living. www.AvestaHousing.org

###