

Local Tornado Survivor Program Receives National Award



2022 Innovation Project Award

The Tornado Survivor Pathways to Homeownership Program was awarded the 2022 Innovative Project of the Year by the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) in recognition of the Program's efforts to address the needs of families affected by the 2019 tornadoes that tore through the Greater Dayton region. Laura Mercer, retired executive director of the Miami Valley Long Term Recovery Operations Group, accepted the award earlier this week on behalf of the Pathways Program at the National VOAD Conference in Baltimore, Maryland.

"It is an honor to be recognized nationally for the collaborative efforts that are helping our region continue to heal and rebuild following the 2019 tornadoes," Mercer said. "The impact of the tornadoes served as a catalyst to critically look at the community's needs and opportunities, and further engage organizations in sharing information

and aligning in purpose. The resulting collaboration made the Pathways Program possible has been an incredible win for all."

The destruction left in the wake of 19 tornadoes on May 27, 2019, left thousands of individuals and families, who live in some of the region's most vulnerable communities, in need of shelter and basic necessities. While the repair and rebuild work for homeowners was managed by the Miami Valley Long Term Recovery Operations Group, the Tornado Survivor Pathways to Homeownership Program is helping qualified, tornado-impacted renters to become first-time homeowners, as well as helping to stabilize tornado-impacted neighborhoods through investment in new, owner-occupied housing and to disrupt generational poverty cycles.

The Pathways Program builds homes on donated property, using both volunteer build teams and contractors, and is funded through private, nonprofit and governmental funding sources. Qualified renters work with The HomeOwnership Center of Greater Dayton to learn what it takes to become successful homeowners and mortgage ready in order to purchase a completed Pathways' home at market rates. Proceeds from each sale are used to fund the construction of the next house. Fifty-two tornado-impacted renters have applied to date, with 16 families now or very close to being mortgage ready. Three homes have been completed, and 13 additional homes are currently under construction within the City of Dayton, Harrison Township and the City of Trotwood. The first homeowner closed on her house earlier this week.

More than 30 public and private partners, including 8 national VOAD members, City of Dayton, County Corp, The Dayton Foundation, Harrison Township, The HomeOwnership Center of Greater Dayton, Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission, Montgomery County, City of Trotwood and various build teams, have supported or participated in the Pathways collaborative program.

Said Adam Blake, vice president of Housing for County Corp, “CountyCorp is very proud to be part of such an innovative approach to disaster recovery. Without the entire community’s support this would not have been possible.”

“Rebuilding people’s lives from the tornadoes started with clearing dangerous, destroyed homes so residents could move forward with new construction on those properties,” said Carolyn Rice, president of the Montgomery County Commission. “We are so pleased that our Montgomery County Landbank could play a part in this recovery by clearing several of those properties. It took a collection of community partners to finance recovery, and our County was proud to join the Pathways Project in this effort.”

More information about the Tornado Survivor Pathway to Homeownership Program is available at www.homeownershipdayton.org or call (937) 853-1600.

About The Dayton Foundation

Established in 1921, The Dayton Foundation is the largest grantmaker in Greater Dayton, exceeding \$57 million in grants in fiscal year 2021. Since its founding more than 100 years ago, over \$1.1 billion in grants have been awarded from its more than 4,000 charitable funds with assets totaling \$818.7 million. More information about The Dayton Foundation is available at www.daytonfoundation.org or follow the Foundation on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn.

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