

The Buncombe Rental Assistance Collaborative: Asheville's Innovative Initiative to Bridge the Gap Between Nonprofits, Renters and Landlords

The organization is calling on nonprofits, landlords, policymakers, developers and more to work together to achieve a greater impact in combating housing instability in Buncombe County, North Carolina.

BUNCOMBE COUNTY, N.C. (Nov. 7, 2023) – The Buncombe Rental Assistance Collaborative is a partnership of five non-profits in the county committed to mitigating housing insecurity. The collaborative recruits and incentivizes property managers to accept federal rental subsidies and educates and supports tenants, fostering successful landlord-tenant relationships. The organizations involved include Thrive Asheville, Homeward Bound, Asheville Housing Authority, HUD-VASH and Helpmate.

The Collaborative has combined resources to address housing insecurity in the county by providing detailed instructions and clear criteria for renters and landlords to apply for various assistance programs, including those to help with rent, utilities and repairs. A vast and comprehensive directory of local organizations, agencies, and government programs that offer rental assistance, legal aid, and housing counseling services empowers renters and landlords with valuable insights. These resources can be found on the Collaborative's website at <https://buncomberentalassistance.org>.

“Our work also hopes to address the stigma around housing instability by offering landlords, real estate developers and property management companies critical information and incentives to participate in these programs,” said Kate Pett, Deputy Director of Thrive Asheville. “By joining forces, we can comprehensively address the housing crisis and foster a more inclusive and compassionate community for all Buncombe County.”

In Buncombe County, there are over 100 vulnerable households with active rental assistance vouchers that are unable to find housing. Approximately 64% of these households include children. Because landlords are unwilling to accept federal rental subsidies, marginalized groups are trapped in concentrated poverty, and the community misses out on millions of dollars in federal funding for housing each year.

The Collaborative is building bridges to support a thriving community in Buncombe County and break the cycle of poverty, helping to reduce restrictive policies that keep individuals trapped in high-poverty areas, increasing social mobility and utilizing millions of underutilized federal funding for housing each year.

“We applaud BRAC for their work to get unhoused individuals into homes and arm them with the information and materials needed to have housing stability,” said Buncombe County Commission Chairman Brownie Newman. “The City and County are proud to fund this unique and impactful organization, along with numerous other foundations and individuals, including Blue Cross Blue Shield.”

“BRAC takes care of all the uncertainties and hurdles a landlord would have before applying to this program, like rental guarantees, upfront costs and education needed to join the program, damage insurance funds and more,” said George Tsiros, a long-time landlord with the program. “Working with The Collaborative has opened my eyes to the real-life impact I can make on the housing crisis.”

BRAC partners have worked together for 8 months to successfully move more than 50 vulnerable households into safe, stable housing but need assistance from the community to move 100 more in the upcoming year. Ways to support BRAC in their commitment to addressing challenges for the housing insecure and bridging the landlord/ tenant relationships include bringing more properties to the program

through Realtor Partnerships, making landlord and investor connections, and becoming a BRAC Landlord.

To learn more about ways to get involved and access the resources available, please visit <https://buncomberentalassistance.org> or contact Kate Pett at kate@thriveasheville.org.

About The Buncombe Rental Assistance Collaborative:

The Buncombe Rental Assistance Collaborative is an initiative aimed at helping renters and landlords in Western North Carolina navigate housing instability challenges. The collaborative works with government agencies, nonprofits and community leaders to provide information, guidance, and resources related to housing assistance programs to both renters and landlords. Participating organizations include Thrive Asheville, Homeward Bound, Asheville Housing Works, HUD-VASH and Helpmate.

Media Contact:

Emily Brice
ebrice@fwv-us.com
919-610-3319

###