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Better Way Anaheim offers volunteer community service, help ending homelessness



ANAHEIM, Calif. (Oct. 24, 2017) — Better Way Anaheim, an innovative pilot program offering voluntary community service projects for those who are homeless, was unanimously approved by Anaheim’s City Council on Tuesday.

Better Way Anaheim will provide basic work experience as well as access to additional services to help end homelessness.

“Better Way Anaheim has the potential to transform lives,” said Mayor Tom Tait, who first announced the program at his 2017 State of the City address in January. “Work through volunteering brings dignity and purpose and can be the first step toward ending homelessness.”

Better Way Anaheim is set to start in 30 to 45 days. Love Anaheim, a nonprofit that brings together other nonprofits, faith-based groups, schools, businesses and other volunteers to work on community service projects, has been tapped to run the program.

The Council approved a contract with Love Anaheim for up to \$30,000 for six months with the option of three one-year renewals at an annual cost of \$70,000.

Love Anaheim will work with Long Beach-based City Net, Anaheim’s partner on homeless outreach, and others that are part of the Anaheim Homeless Collaborative, a collection of more than 100 groups working collectively to address homelessness.

The groups will help identify potential candidates who would benefit from community service as a way of developing basic work experience.

Love Anaheim will conduct weekly community service outings of up to five hours each for the first two months and could expand to twice weekly outings after that.

Participants will work to clean up parks, paint trash cans or fire hydrants and work on other community projects.

Those taking part in Better Way Anaheim will work as volunteers and be provided food and gift cards worth \$60 for each day of service.

They’ll also have access to the Anaheim Homeless Collaborative with referrals to housing, healthcare, social services benefits, employment and other services designed to end homelessness.

Participants could come from locations including the Bridges at Kraemer Place shelter in Anaheim and City Net’s service center on the Santa Ana River Trail.

The city of Anaheim is transferring to Love Anaheim a surplus Dodge Caravan, formerly used by Anaheim Public Utilities, with an estimated value of \$1,300 to \$1,500.

The van, now wrapped in the Better Way Anaheim and Love Anaheim logos, will be used by a driver and helper to take up to five participants on community service outings.

Longer-term plans for Better Way Anaheim call for enlisting area businesses that could provide projects and work experience to program participants.

Eventually, Better Way Anaheim is seen expanding into a job-training and employment program as part of Anaheim’s larger efforts to address homelessness.

Anaheim has a comprehensive program that includes weekly outreach to those who are homeless, host-city support for Orange County's first year-round shelter, Bridges at Kraemer Place, and public safety and code enforcement where needed to address quality of life and community issues.

Since January 2014, Anaheim and its partners have helped get more than 800 people off the streets and into permanent housing.

For more on what Anaheim is doing to address homelessness, please see Anaheim.net/homeless.