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## **Hamilton County Health Department Homeless Healthcare Center Receives Achievement Award**

HAMILTON COUNTY, TN – The Hamilton County Health Department’s Homeless Health Care Center has been recognized with an Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo). This award honors innovative, effective county government programs that strengthen services for residents. “We are honored NACo has chosen to acknowledge the outstanding work done by our Hamilton County Health Department on behalf of the homeless,” said Hamilton County Mayor Jim Copping. “This distinction is especially important because our health department provided outstanding service to the homeless community at the same time they battled a pandemic that ravaged this community and took more than 1,150 lives. In my opinion, every member of our health department is a true hero.”

NACo recognized the Homeless Health Care Center’s response to COVID-19 and the effect that it had on the homeless population in our community. The Homeless Health Care Center is a Federally Qualified Health Center and is a part of the nation’s largest healthcare safety network, providing high quality, culturally competent, comprehensive primary care, and supportive social services to people experiencing homelessness in our community. Throughout the pandemic, the Homeless Health Center remained open for face-to-face visits, providing COVID-19 services such as testing and vaccinations in addition to primary care, dental, social services, and behavioral health care. They worked with the Community Kitchen to ensure testing occurred when cold weather shelters were open. Separate housing was located for individuals who tested positive and Homeless Health Center staff provided care to them during their isolation period 24/7.

“It’s the mission of the Homeless Health Care Center to promote the well-being of people experiencing homelessness in our community through comprehensive, medical, dental, behavioral health, and social services. This is a tall order under normal operation and pre-pandemic circumstances. It takes a dedicated team of extraordinarily compassionate professionals to achieve the outcomes they have. The multidisciplinary staff of dedicated professionals never wavered in their mission despite the long hours, additional tasks, and inherent risks of contracting a potentially deadly virus,” says Dr. Karen Moyer, Medical Director of the Hamilton County Health Department’s Homeless Health Care Center.

When the pandemic began, the Center hired and trained additional staff, purchased medical equipment and supplies, educated other homeless service providers in the community about COVID-19, and provided personal protective equipment, testing, shelter, and vaccinations. From March 2020 to the present, they performed 6,072 COVID-19 tests, provided respite space to 213 COVID-positive residents, vaccinated 1,625 individuals, provided over 35,366 visits to those experiencing homelessness through the health center. This was all accomplished in partnership with other community agencies and providers that worked to pull together resources and help the most vulnerable in our community.

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