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Contact: Lia Truitt or Candice Honaker, 512-472-9599  
[ltruitt@echristianpr.com](mailto:ltruitt@echristianpr.com) or [chonaker@echristianpr.com](mailto:chonaker@echristianpr.com)

## **Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation announces pledge to help open shelter for women, children and families**

AUSTIN, Texas – The Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation pledged its financial support for the Rathgeber Center—a new, temporary emergency shelter for women with children, as well as families. The Downtown Alliance Foundation will contribute \$100,000 and assist in efforts to raise additional funds needed.

The Rathgeber Center is a newly constructed, \$12 million, 212-bed, women/children and family emergency shelter scheduled to open this fall, provided the Salvation Army closes a \$500,000 fundraising gap in the \$4.9 million needed for annual operations. Local philanthropist Dick Rathgeber has pledged to contribute \$100,000 of his own funds if the Downtown Alliance Foundation can help to raise \$400,000.

“We can bring attention to this critical issue in our community and take this opportunity to rally support among our friends and the community who care about downtown and women and children in need,” Molly Alexander, executive director of the Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation, said. “This challenge grant allows the Downtown Alliance Foundation to leverage our funds with Dick Rathgeber’s pledge and for others to get involved to make an immediate impact on homelessness in Austin.”

Opening the Rathgeber Center will enable the Salvation Army to move the women with children and families out of its 8<sup>th</sup> and Neches Street downtown shelter and to provide access to shelter for all the families on their waiting list. Currently, women with children and families occupy about 55 beds per night downtown. The beds downtown will be repurposed to provide increased shelter with housing-focused case management for single men and women.

“I’ve been deeply committed to making this new shelter a reality, and I’m thrilled that the Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation has stepped up to make this pledge,” Rathgeber said. “Leadership and participation from organizations like the Downtown

Alliance will be absolutely crucial to solving Austin's homelessness issues and helping people find their way back into permanent housing."

According to data from Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO), there are about 2,250 people experiencing homelessness on any given night in Austin, but about 1,100 are without shelter. Temporary shelter with housing-focused case management significantly increases the chances for people experiencing homelessness to become housed.

In June, the Austin City Council approved moving forward with an allocation of \$1.5 million to fund operations for the Rathgeber Center and to fund housing-focused case management for all the Salvation Army downtown shelter's clients. The city council also passed a resolution on June 20 directing the city manager to provide recommendations in August to create temporary shelters and approved camping and parking locations in every council district for people experiencing homelessness.

"The Rathgeber Center will provide families who are experiencing homelessness with a safe place to stay and a path to permanent housing and will make available more shelter beds Downtown for individuals," said Council Member Kathie Tovo. "I'm thrilled that the City of Austin, the Downtown Austin Alliance, and the Rathgebers have come forward to help the Salvation Army get closer to its goal of operating its Family Center at 100% capacity, and I challenge the community to join us."

The Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a downtown everyone loves through transformative projects and thoughtful investment. Contributions to the foundation for the Rathgeber Center and other downtown projects are tax deductible.

"The Downtown Alliance and Downtown Alliance Foundation recognize the critical need to move children and families out of the downtown shelter as well as the immediate need for increased shelter beds in Austin," Dewitt Peart, president and CEO of the Downtown Alliance, said.

Those interested in making a donation to the Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation can find more information at: <https://downtownaustin.com/about-us/foundation/>

More information about the Salvation Army Rathgeber Center can be found through the following link:

<http://salvationarmyaustin.org/rathgeber-center/>

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### **About Downtown Austin Alliance**

The Downtown Austin Alliance (Downtown Alliance) works with key downtown stakeholders—property owners, residents, business owners, community organizations and government officials—to advance our collective vision for the future of downtown Austin. The Downtown Alliance is engaged in dozens of projects and issues that contribute to the safety, cleanliness, and appeal of downtown Austin to residents, employees and visitors. As a full-time advocate for downtown, the Downtown Alliance is actively engaged in planning decisions that impact the area. We also advance downtown's vision through direct services supporting safety and cleanliness. For more information, please visit [www.downtownaustin.com](http://www.downtownaustin.com).

### **About the Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation**

The Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation is a 501c3 nonprofit organization created in 2018 to fund and implement key projects that support the community's Downtown Austin Vision. The Foundation invests in the development and activation of public spaces, diverse cultural experiences, and place-based research to better understand what drives a successful, vibrant downtown. Ultimately, the goal is to make downtown Austin a more vital and livable place for all by bringing together corporate leadership and philanthropic investment to create a lasting legacy in downtown Austin. For more information, visit <https://downtownaustin.com/about-us/foundation/>.