

**DRAFT OP-ED
FOR EXCLUSIVE SUBMISSION TO DETROIT NEWS**

Written by Tim Joy, board member, MCREST (Macomb County Rotating Emergency Shelter Team) and chair, MCREST Returning Home Campaign

MACOMB COUNTY'S CHILDREN NEED OUR HELP

How do you safely shelter during a pandemic when you don't have a home? That's a question facing thousands of Macomb County residents experiencing homelessness right now—and many of them are children. For them, the trauma of day-to-day changes in shelter, added to the physical and emotional uncertainty, can cause lasting psychological damage. Throw in cold temperatures and a pandemic, and that's a dire situation.

Back when the coronavirus first hit and churches shut down, many people lost their only places of shelter, temporary as they might be. In Macomb County, people experiencing homelessness are now staying at an area motel to stay healthy from the pandemic and off the street. MCREST (Macomb County Rotating Emergency Shelter Team) is grateful for this temporary solution on the path to self-reliance.

With the cold weather comes an increase in guest intake for the County and for MCREST. Thanks to the cooperation of local nonprofits and County departments, including the Macomb County Emergency Management, we're able to triple the number of guests receiving temporary motel shelter through MCREST - from 60 to 180 each month. This keeps people safe, healthy and warm.

But what about the children? MCREST is working to finish renovations on a special building that will be a temporary home for women and children. But MCREST needs help —\$300,000 of it — to finish the project. When complete, the Mt. Clemens building will provide food, educational resources, childcare and tutoring, job training and job placement for up to 45 women and children at a time. This Center will allow students to attend remote classes from a secure location. It will help job seekers gain financial independence.

We're grateful to Weingartz and Christian Family Credit Union for their leadership in our campaign. It is time for additional businesses to step up. For more information

on how businesses and individuals can help these important women and children, visit www.mcrest.org/returninghome.

As this pandemic rages on, your help will be a crucial step to relieve the crisis of homelessness in our community.

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