

## Press Release-Cheyney University Serves the Community for MLK Day

On Monday, January 21, 2019, Cheyney University of Pennsylvania will be serving the community for a day of service to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The University will begin its day of service by providing a meal for the homeless at Safe Harbor of Chester County in West Chester, Pennsylvania. The meal is being catered by students in Cheyney's Hospitality, Restaurant, and Tourism Management (HRTM) program with sponsorship from Pennsylvania State Employees Credit Union (PSECU) and Cheyney's Aquaculture Research and Education Laboratory (AREL). Later in the week activities will continue with other student volunteers creating greeting cards for local hospital patients and postcards for young girls who are at risk of early marriage and female mutilation living in a safe house in Kenya through an organization called Massai Youth Outreach Organization (MAYOO).

With the launch of the Institute for the Contemporary African American Experience (ICAAE), Cheyney University is committed to serve as the catalyst and facilitator in creating networks, fostering communications, developing, and testing solutions to contemporary issues among individuals, organizations and communities to work collectively beyond the walls of the academic institution, such as homelessness and the need for shelters. "While there is certainly value in research, our intention through the Institute is to bring tangible solutions to the challenges facing underserved communities," said Cheyney University President, Aaron A. Walton.

Homeless shelters locally and around the world provide support for those who are most vulnerable. In many cases, their goal is to empower the people they serve to live independent lives by providing them a safe place to rest, food, water, and the compassionate care of staff and volunteers. In Philadelphia alone, it is estimated that approximately 15,000 people, including families, seek shelters like Safe Harbor each year according to Project Home. "Homelessness can happen to anyone regardless of age, race, ethnicity and income level. Chester County is the wealthiest county in the state, but as many as 700 individuals in Chester County find themselves needing emergency shelter at any given time. For the majority of these individuals, this is their first experience at homelessness and they are shocked and surprised that it has happened to them, Judy Jeffords-Homitz, Executive Director of Safe Harbor of Chester County, pointed out.

To honor Dr. King's legacy of service to others, the HRTM students will prepare and serve a meal inspired by Chef Christine Neugebauer, a member of the prestigious Honorable Order of the Golden Toque. The Order is limited to 100 lifetime members who have achieved professional attainment of high estate, abiding interest in professional progress, and devoted and distinguished service to the culinary profession and arts. Additionally, Cheyney's AREL program, under the direction of Dr. Steven Hughes, will provide fresh ingredients grown in its state-of-the-art aquaponics facility on campus.

Safe Harbor of Chester County has a mission to not only feed and shelter the homeless, but also to understand each person's background and develop a plan to address his/her challenges to live an independent and productive life. Safe Harbor of Chester County has the capacity to shelter 40 men and women and provides an invaluable service to the community.

Maasai Youth Outreach Organization is a community-based youth outreach organization formed in 2006 and registered in May 2009, with the ministry of Social Services in Kenya. It is an indigenous Maasai group that was formed to address issues such as youth empowerment, gender equality, and health awareness.

Cheyney University of Pennsylvania is part of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) educating students from all backgrounds in a variety of disciplines. This includes learning the latest trends in urban farming in the AREL and offering hands-on practice at catering and managing a restaurant through our HRTM program at Cheyney's own 50-seat facility called The Grille.

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