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Local Nonprofit The Other Ones Foundation Breaks Ground on Second Half of the Esperanza Community

WHEN: Friday 9/13, B-roll availability 10-11, remarks and interviews 11-12

WHERE: The Esperanza Community 780 S Hwy 183

WHO: Speakers include Chris Baker, (Founder and Executive Director - TOOF), Mayor Kirk Watson, Chris Turnley (TOOF Board Chair and Executive Vice President of Member Experience - UFCU), Judge Andy Brown - Travis County, Jason Cöle (former Esperanza resident, artist)

As Austin continues to suffer from a lack of affordable housing and rental subsidies, The Other Ones Foundation (TOOF) is finding new and innovative ways to shelter and house people experiencing homelessness. TOOF is breaking ground on the second half of the Esperanza Community, which pairs vocational training with safe and dignified non-congregate shelter.

Esperanza's low barrier and trauma informed nature makes it a unique and integral part of Austin's continuum of care; serving people who have not had their needs met by more traditional shelters, including people experiencing chronic homelessness, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, people with pets, and couples, among others.

The site will feature 200 cabins, communal spaces, hygiene facilities, and a vocational skills center offering certifications in HVAC, auto mechanics, plumbing, and welding. Holistic services offered on site include food access, work opportunities, housing navigation, substance use recovery support, and more.

"The progress at Esperanza is happening, and it's happening fast. This next phase will give us the ability to offer shelter services and vocational training to hundreds more of our unhoused brothers and sisters each year," said Chris Baker, Founder and Executive Director of TOOF. "Our model offers each person a door of their own they can lock at night. That feeling of safety allows people to start addressing the underlying issues that led to their housing crisis, and creates a dignified environment for them to heal. Throw in some vocational training services, and we've got a recipe for success."



"This groundbreaking strengthens the homeless response system we've been building over the past two years— making sure we're connecting more people experiencing homelessness with the shelter and services they need to get healthier and to feel safer," said Mayor Kirk Watson. "We're making huge investments to expand Esperanza, including the \$60 million I helped secure from the state last year – getting more of our unhoused neighbors out of encampments and into safe shelter."

"Travis County is proud to support and invest in dignified shelter and vocational training for our unhoused neighbors," said Travis County Judge Andy Brown. "As our population continues to grow, we need to make sure that the needs of all people, especially the most vulnerable, are met. The Esperanza Community is a crucial and unique component of our homelessness response system, and we are excited to see the second phase underway."

Please join us for this groundbreaking for more information, interviews, and a chance to see the progress at the Esperanza Community.