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SEPTA Wins National Award for Innovation in Social Service

PHILADELPHIA (December 21, 2021) – SEPTA and its partners Project HOME and the City of Philadelphia recently received a special award from TransitCenter, a national transportation advocacy organization, for the “Hub of Hope” program.

Every year, New York City-based TransitCenter recognizes outstanding work across the country in the transit field with its “Frequency” awards. In announcing SEPTA’s award last week, Tom Pera of TransitCenter, said, “The Innovation in Social Services Award recognizes an agency committed to going beyond its role as a transit service provider to become a community resource for positive change.”

“We are incredibly honored to receive this award,” said SEPTA CEO and General Manager Leslie S. Richards. “As we strive to find compassionate, long-term solutions for the vulnerable population, we are fortunate to work with Sister Mary Scullion and her exceptional team of outreach experts at Project HOME’s Hub of Hope. Through our partnership with the City of Philadelphia and Project HOME, we are making SEPTA safer for everyone.”

The award comes at a time when SEPTA is expanding its social outreach efforts under the S.C.O.P.E. program. With S.C.O.P.E., which stands for safety, cleanliness, ownership, partnership and engagement, the authority is amplifying the work it began in 2011 with the Hub of Hope and deploying outreach workers to multiple stations throughout its system.

The Hub of Hope, which started as a short-term, winter initiative and became a permanent, year-round program in January 2018, provides outreach services to individuals experiencing homelessness on and around the SEPTA system. Within its sprawling 11,000-square-foot location in SEPTA’s Suburban Station Concourse, the Hub of Hope offers meals, health care services and help finding a permanent home, among other services.

In implementing S.C.O.P.E., the authority has adopted Hub of Hope’s model of partnership. In just over six months, the S.C.O.P.E. team has forged alliances with civic organizations, city governments, nonprofits and universities throughout the five-county region to work on solutions to the challenges of homelessness, substance abuse and mental health issues. “Similar to our approach at the Hub of Hope, we are focused on connecting people to services, not policing them,” said Ken Divers, assistant director of transportation who manages the S.C.O.P.E. program.

Although Divers is S.C.O.P.E.’s dedicated “vulnerable population lead,” the entire agency – from General Manager Leslie Richards to frontline platform attendants—is involved in finding ways to help those in need.

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