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CATHOLIC DIOCESE TERMINATES 35-YEAR LEASE WITH SETON YOUTH SHELTERS Charity Must Find New Home for Homeless, Runaway and Trafficked Boys' by December 31, 2020

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Virginia Beach, VA — Seton Youth Shelters has a deadline of December 31, 2020 to find a new place to shelter youth in crisis being taken in at its Boys' House. Seton's North Lynnhaven Road shelter location has been a cornerstone of the organization since 1985. Seton Youth Shelters was established in 1984 as Mother Seton House, Inc., by three local clergy and a few citizens who were concerned about the vulnerability of runaway and homeless girls living on the streets. Initially, girls were sheltered in the homes of host families but soon the number of girls in need of assistance grew to the point that St. Nicholas Catholic Church in Virginia Beach's Kings Grant community stepped forward to provide the use of their rectory to house up to 11. In 1999, St. Aidan's Episcopal Church partnered with Seton on a second shelter enabling the organization to provide shelter, counseling and support for boys in crisis at the former rectory of St. Nicholas Catholic Church.

Seton Youth Shelters has been an indispensable resource for the Virginia community—without pause—since 1985. “The timing could not be worse for us, and for the thousands of youth we serve each year. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost support, we now find ourselves searching for a shelter for the hundreds of boys we serve each year. We need both a short-term and a long-term solution to this emergency,” Executive Director, Jennifer Sieracki, explains. “Seton made a promise in 1985 to provide shelter, counseling and support to our region's most vulnerable runaway, homeless, and more recently and frequently, trafficked youth. That promise includes a commitment to never charge a youth or their family for the lifesaving and critical shelter, outreach and mentoring services which we provide 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.”

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Seton Youth Shelters is facing unprecedented revenue losses in the hundreds of thousands of dollars over the next year from loss of annual fund, event, and corporate donor donations as a direct result of COVID-19. This threatens Seton Youth Shelters' ability to provide the most vulnerable in Hampton Roads with a safety net, and the loss of the Boys' House presents even greater challenges ahead. Sieracki continues, "The need for our services will only increase over the next few months, as we are a microcosm of our community, in both achievements and in adversity. Right now, our community is in a state of crisis. COVID-19 is creating stress and hardships on youth and their families, and this stress and hardship continue to bring those youth onto the streets and into our shelters and related programs. Without us, these children will have nowhere to turn—nowhere to go—but onto the streets and into the hands of predators. For their safety, our doors must remain open."

Seton Youth Shelters is the region's only organization devoted exclusively to providing shelter, street outreach and mentoring services to youth 9 up to 18. Each year hundreds of boys and girls, ages 9 up to 18, arrive at our two Virginia Beach residential shelters—often in the middle of the night, sometimes with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Our professional staff welcomes them with food, shelter, clothing, school supplies and the counseling and support necessary for them to either return to their families or continues on to another safe, home environment. Seton's Outreach Program, visits area schools, events, and neighborhoods, reaching out to thousands of youth, offering crisis intervention, counseling, and shelter options—a lifeline for this vulnerable population. Our Mentoring Children of Prisoners program gives children of incarcerated parents the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to reach their full potential.

To learn more about Seton Youth Shelters, visit setonyouthshelters.org or our Facebook page at facebook.com/setonyouthshelters. For information about how to help, contact Jennifer Sieracki at 757.963.5795 x 105 or email jsieracki@setonyouthshelters.org.



Jennifer Sieracki—Executive Director

Seton Youth Shelters' Boys' House, where youth in crisis have been housed for 35 years.

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