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Must! Charities Announces Half-Million Dollar Partnership with ECHO
Must's largest community gift will help homeless families in North County

March 1, 2017 (Templeton, CA) – Must! Charities is proud to announce a new \$500,000 partnership with El Camino Homeless Organization (ECHO), the only homeless shelter serving all of north San Luis Obispo County. The half-million dollar partnership is the largest community gift made by must! charities, the grassroots collaboration of friends and business owners. Must! works with existing non-profit organizations to evoke major change resulting in sustainable programs. The four-year plan includes multiple phases with the ultimate goal of serving the community by increasing efficiencies of the shelter, and strengthening the success rate of finding permanent housing for homeless families.

“After an extensive two-year evaluation with multiple steps in the vetting process must! charities is honored to lead the North County in addressing one of our greatest needs – homelessness,” said Becky Gray, Executive Director of must! charities. “Homelessness is a problem for all walks of life – adults, students, veterans and families. Over 60% of ECHO clients are families with children. We are excited to partner with ECHO and truly help those who are ready to help themselves.”

The initial phase of the plan is strategic in its nature and includes a review of capital, personnel resources, and Board of Directors development with strategic planning. The first phase will not increase the number of beds directly at the shelter but will pave the way for increased efficiencies. Gray has already been working alongside ECHO through the vetting processes, which has resulted in local businesses and community members stepping up and asking how they can help.

“Prior to our official partnership beginning, our conversations with ECHO have already resulted in donated exterior windows, employee compensation and benefits policies, and many other improvements,” said Gray. “It’s remarkable how ECHO is motivated to make positive changes, and the community is coming together to support them.”

The other key element of phase one is to continue evaluating the unmet needs of the North County homeless. The must!/ECHO partnership will establish focus groups as well as create dialogue with city and county officials as it relates to addressing homeless issues throughout our region.

“The partnership with must! charities will enable ECHO to better serve homeless families and individuals in the North County. Through shelter improvements such as a solar electric system and a laundry facility, increased staffing and client services, our mutual goals of raising families out of poverty to become productive and contributing members of our community will be achieved,” said Jim Patterson, Board President of ECHO.

must! charities:

Since 2012, must! charities has committed over \$1.5 million dollars in North San Luis Obispo County. Must! Charities works together with individuals and businesses in the community who are dedicated to improving the quality of life of those most in need. Must!'s community work adds to the vibrancy of the region by strengthening partnerships and programs through fundraising and advocacy. They continuously empower non-profits to make strategic, sustainable changes that create greater impacts in relationships. www.mustcharities.org

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El Camino Homeless Organization (ECHO):

ECHO has been in operation for 15 years. ECHO was started as an all-volunteer based organization. Over the years ECHO has grown, but the success of ECHO clients continues to be largely due to the unique ability to provide these services through strong community support, a dedicated volunteer base, and professional staff. ECHO consistently strives to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness one person at a time—one family at a time. ECHO believes in the model of lifting those who are ready to help themselves. www.echoshelter.net

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