Roomily and Santa Clara County House Sharing Program Team Up to Offer Free Online Services

- Upcoming House Sharing Webinar to Highlight Benefits and Best Practices During Shelter in Place During Affordable Housing Month -

May 26, 2020, Santa Clara, CA--Santa Clara County’s House Sharing Program, operated by the Catholic Charities of Santa Clara, is now offering its service online by working with Roomily, a new house sharing platform working with nonprofits and municipal organizations. The House Sharing Program and Roomily will be hosting a free webinar for all Santa Clara County residents, “Keeping the Doors Open” on May 28th at 1 PM. (Register online: https://housesharingwebinar.eventbrite.com.)

As a free service to all Santa Clara County residents, the House Sharing Program connects people who have spare bedrooms to others seeking a long term room rental and includes pre-screening, background checks, and follow up support for all participants to help ensure success. With online services, residents can now sign up with any web-connected device. Once screened and admitted, program participants create their profiles, rental listings (if they are home providers), and directly connect to potential housemates through a direct messaging feature. By leveraging Roomily’s platform, the House Sharing Program continues to offer a comprehensive home sharing service with added convenience for participants and a more streamlined process, overall.

Working together with Roomily, the Catholic Charities House Sharing Program provides one to one support to participants every step of the way, from set up to match success and beyond. For residents requiring special assistance to access and interact online, House Sharing staff will be available to help.

“Catholic Charities is excited to be partnering with Roomily so we can offer online services which expand our reach to our Santa Clara County residents interested in participating as a renter or room provider. At the same time, Roomily allows us to comply with social distancing measures now and going forward.” said Greg Kepferle, CEO, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County. “We’re expecting Roomily’s platform to help increase our House Sharing program’s efficiency, and ultimately, our capacity to serve more Santa Clara County residents.”

“We began Roomily as a way to help alleviate the rental housing shortage,” said Jill Lindenbaum, Co-Founder of Roomily. “By working closely with the Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County and other organizations that are addressing the housing crisis head on, we can help them to deliver services at scale and effectively reach more residents.”

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“It’s fabulous – everything is great for the provider and home sharer. It’s great to have an organization instead of going in alone,” said Donnamae, a House Sharing Home Provider client.

**Early Economic Impact of COVID-19 and Housing Implications**

Prior to the pandemic, fifty percent of California renter households were considered cost burdened (i.e., more than thirty percent of household income goes towards housing costs). Early research shows that among these already cost-burdened households, about 2.3 million of them (or about 7 million people) are likely experiencing immediate job or income loss (Estimating Covid-19’s Near Term Impact on Renters, Elizabeth Kneebone and Cecil Murray, Terner Center For Housing, UC Berkeley, May 2020).

**Benefits of Home Sharing**

House sharing provides more naturally occurring affordable housing to the rental supply and, at the same time, provides much needed extra income, which can help pay mortgage or student loans, meet day to day expenses, offset lost wages, or go towards savings. This could be especially beneficial for anyone who experienced lost wages recently, as well as for first time home buyers, empty nesters and seniors on a fixed income.

In addition to financial benefits, there are many other benefits that result from home sharing. For example, home sharing can help seniors live independently and age in place, especially if a housemate contributes to the household needs/chore. This arrangement can also address social isolation, which can lead to depression and other negative health outcomes.

For renters, home sharing opens up housing possibilities closer to work and school, helping to reduce commute times which leads to less road traffic for all. In addition, the larger community also benefits as affordable rental housing supports a more socio-economically diverse, viable and vibrant community.

**Background on Home Sharing Program**

Santa Clara County’s House Sharing Program was designed to offer new housing options and stability for community members with varying income levels, such as seniors, persons on fixed incomes, working individuals, transition youth, students and veterans.

As the nation’s population is aging and the average household size is shrinking, home sharing makes sense especially in communities with significant supply of single residential home with three, four and more bedrooms.

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Registration Details for May 28 Webinar and Program Information

The House Share Program is hosting the free webinar, “Keeping the Doors Open” for all Santa Clara County residents on May 28th at 1 PM. (Register online: https://housesharingwebinar.eventbrite.com.) Individuals interested in participating in the new House Sharing program should call (408) 325-5134 or email HousesharingSCC@catholiccharitiesscc.org. For more information, please visit www.catholiccharitiesscc.org/house-sharing-home.

About Roomily:
Roomily is a social impact startup on a mission to provide more naturally affordable housing by tapping into the power of spare rooms for long term rentals. Working hand in hand with nonprofits, school districts, municipalities and large employers, Roomily provides an online platform that helps these organizations connect home providers with spare rooms to rental seekers creating online efficiencies for scaled programs built to deliver trust and significant social impact.

About Charities Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County:
Charities Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County has worked to strengthen families and build economic self-reliance for the poor and vulnerable in the county for more than 63 years. Each year, more than 480 employees and 1,000 volunteers serve more than 40,000 individuals of all cultures and beliefs through more than 30 programs. Program areas include behavioral health, youth and family services, economic development, employment, housing, immigration legal services, older adult services, refugee resettlement, refugee foster care, emergency services, and more. Catholic Charities is working to reduce poverty with social change goals that target the alleviation, prevention, and reduction of poverty in our communities. To learn more, please visit www.catholiccharitiesscc.org.

About the County of Santa Clara’s Office of Supportive Housing:
The County of Santa Clara’s Office of Supportive Housing's (OSH) mission is to increase the supply of housing and supportive housing that is affordable and available to extremely low income and/or special needs households served by the County. One of its primary aims is to support the County of Santa Clara’s mission of promoting a healthy, safe, and prosperous community by ending and preventing homelessness. OSH’s major activities include efforts to organize and operate homeless services countywide, including homelessness prevention, crisis response, and Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Re-Housing programs. In addition, OSH strives to increase the supply of housing by funding and spurring the development of housing for low income households, with a particular focus on extremely low incomes. OSH is the lead department within the County implementing the 2016 Measure A.

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Contact:
Jill Lindenbaum
Roomily, Inc.
415-572-3433

LaDonn DuBois
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County, Sr. Dir. Communications
408-799-5541/ldubois@CatholicCharitiesSCC.org