

Partners receive \$1.1 million for housing

First it was Project Roomkey – through which California became the first state in the nation to secure FEMA approval to provide safe, isolated housing for thousands of the state’s homeless in an effort to keep them safe from COVID-19.

And now the governor has announced that the Mountain Homeless Coalition and the Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino have received \$1.1 million in the sixth round of awards for Homekey.

This \$600 million program provides funds to purchase and rehabilitate housing – including hotels, motels, vacant apartment buildings and other properties – and convert them into permanent long-term housing for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The Housing Authority, said Wendell Wilson, the chair of the Mountain Homeless

Coalition provider network, hired a grant writer “and walked us through the process.”

The objective, he added, “is to get people into something more permanent.” Through Project Roomkey, the Coalition was able to house seven people in motel rooms.

One of those people will be, Wilson said, a good candidate for one of the permanent homes they are funding through the Homekey program. “She can pay some rent. She will be in the 30 percent of her income bracket that we aim for.”

The Coalition and the Housing Authority are using their grant to purchase eight units in Big Bear Lake. There are, Wilson said, four cabins and a duplex as



well as a lot where they plan to place two manufactured homes, one of which will be handicapped accessible.

Priority will be given to elderly individuals with disabilities who are at risk of health complications from

COVID-19.

“We are honored to receive this much-needed funding to provide affordable housing in a remote portion of San Bernardino County. We look forward to converting these rental cabins into future homes,” said Maria Razo, the Housing Authority’s executive director.

Daniel Pensabene, president of the Mountain Homeless Coalition, added, “The Homekey award will provide housing for formerly homeless individuals and families.

We are pleased to receive the funding.”

“This is a tremendous start,” said Wilson. After they close on the properties, he said, they will hold a grand opening. “This is a big step toward providing housing.”

Not only that, he added, but receiving a grant of this magnitude will help the Coalition get other grants.

They also recently were awarded \$236,000 from the state through the county to provide services for seniors. “We will use that money in conjunction with the \$1.1 million,” Wilson said.

For more information on the Mountain Homeless Coalition and its work to reach, inform, serve and house neighbors experiencing homelessness and to educate mountain residents on their needs, visit www.mountainhomelesscoalition.com or www.facebook.com/MountainHomelessCoalition.