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**MAYOR EMANUEL AND ALDERMAN O'SHEA LAUNCH OPERATION HELP-A-HERO TO SUPPORT FORMERLY HOMELESS VETERANS CITYWIDE**

*Aldermen and the Chicago Park District Join Forces to Collect Household Goods for City Veterans*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and [19<sup>th</sup> Ward](#) Alderman Matthew O'Shea today announced the *Operation Help-A-Hero* citywide household item collection drive to assist formerly homeless Veterans moving to permanent housing. Throughout the month of June, residents can donate new, store bought products for a formerly homeless veteran at one of more than 70 designated drop-off locations throughout the City.

"Operation Help-A-Hero gives each of us an opportunity to give back to our brave veterans and ensure that they have the supports they need and a safe place to call home," said Mayor Emanuel. "Our work to end homelessness among veterans has been successful, and is a testament to the hard work of our residents and partners who have come together to help those who are struggling to get back on their feet."

For formerly homeless individuals to successfully maintain permanent housing, it is critical that they receive support, including some basic items, needed to live independently. Led by Alderman O'Shea and the 19<sup>th</sup> Ward, and in collaboration with the Chicago Park District, Mayor Emanuel and Aldermen are calling on residents to drop off new personal hygiene, kitchen, bathroom, and cleaning items to their local ward office or one of the [20 park district locations](#) accepting the donations for the first citywide *Operation Help-A-Hero*.

"Operation Help-A-Hero will not only provide Veterans with the support they need to set up a home again, but will allow our city to demonstrate our appreciation for them and for their service to our country," said Alderman O'Shea. "Our community has a long history of protecting those who protect us. My colleagues and I want to do our part to welcome veterans in their new homes and we encourage our residents to do the same."

This effort builds on the Ending Veteran's Homelessness Initiative (EVHI), through which the City has housed more than 2,100 formerly homeless veterans. The City of Chicago, through EVHI, is working hard to create a system where any episode of homelessness is rare and brief.

“As a Veteran myself, I know how valuable Veterans services are in supporting those of us who have served our country,” said City of Chicago Veterans’ Affairs Director Victor Lagroon. “A program like this, that brings the entire City together, means so much more than just a household item, it means we embrace our veterans as our neighbors.”

Since taking office, Mayor Emanuel has made key investments to support continued education and employment for Veterans. To ensure that all Veterans and military Service Members are able to secure housing and to prevent discrimination in the housing application process, the City’s Council on Human Relations approved the Mayor’s ordinance making Veterans, active military personnel, reservists and National Guard members a protected class.

Additionally, this year Mayor Emanuel launched a new [resource website](#) designed to improve coordination of citywide resources to better meet the needs of Chicago’s military Veterans. By directing the City’s 311 service call center operators to ask callers up front if they are Veterans, operators are able to identify the most appropriate resources and programs that are available. Ultimately, this information helps the city tailor, target, and allocate the right resources for future programs and services to better serve Veterans.

A list of the most commonly requested items can be found at [www.cityofchicago.org/helpahero](http://www.cityofchicago.org/helpahero). All donations will be collected by Military Outreach USA, a faith based non-profit organization supporting those who have served in the United States’ armed services. Materials collected will be distributed through the Jesse Brown Veterans’ Affairs Medical Center.

For more information on Operation Help-A-Hero, visit [www.cityofchicago.org/helpahero](http://www.cityofchicago.org/helpahero).

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