



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Cristina Villarreal

312-743-2031

Cristina.villarreal@cityofchicago.org

THE CITY OF CHICAGO AND ALDERMAN O'SHEA KICK-OFF THIRD ANNUAL OPERATION HELP-A-HERO TO SUPPORT FORMERLY HOMELESS VETERANS

The drive collected 300,000 items last year to support veterans citywide

The 19th Ward Alderman Matthew O'Shea with Jewel Osco and the Department of Family and Support Services today announced the return of Operation Help-A-Hero, a citywide household 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 over 100 designated drop-off locations throughout the City.

"Memorial Day is a day to remember our fallen heroes and recommit ourselves to supporting the brave veterans who call this city home," said Mayor Emanuel. "Chicago continues working to end homelessness among veterans and our success 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."

New this year, the City is partnering with Jewel-Osco to make donating easier for residents. More than 36 stores across Chicago will serve as collections sites.

"Jewel-Osco has long supported our veterans and we are thankful for their service" said Doug Cygan, President of Jewel-Osco. "Operation Help-A-Hero is an opportunity to show our continued support for the men and women who have so bravely risked their lives for our country."

Residents can participate in the collection drive by dropping off new cleaning products, kitchen supplies, toiletries and other items at Jewel-Osco stores, their local ward offices or at one of 16 participating park district locations.

Operation Help-A-Hero officially begins on Memorial Day, May 29 and will run through the 4th of July.

Led by Alderman O'Shea and the 19th Ward, the Operation Help-A-Hero drive includes partnerships between Aldermanic Ward offices, the Chicago Park District and Military Outreach USA, a faith based non-profit organization supporting those who have served in the United States' armed services

"Many of our veterans are living without basic necessities that you and I take for granted. Operation Help-a-Hero is a simple but effective way for all Chicagoans to address that problem and show our veterans the respect and appreciation they deserve," said Alderman O'Shea.

All donations will be collected by Military Outreach USA, and will be distributed by the Jesse Brown Veterans' Affairs Medical Center.

Last year's drive collected 300,000 items to help formerly homeless veteran. The items help assist thousands of veterans to successfully live independently.

This effort builds on the Ending Veteran's Homelessness Initiative (EVHI), through which the City has housed more than 2,200 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.

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.

In 2016, 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 allocates the right resources for future programs and services to better serve Veterans.

For more information on Operation Help-A-Hero or for a complete list of commonly requested items and drop off locations, visit www.cityofchicago.org/helpahero.

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