



PRESS RELEASE FOR
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Youth Re-engagement Drop-in Center in Wheaton

Wheaton, MD – On June 22, the Montgomery County Collaboration Council, through MoCo ReConnect, celebrated the ribbon cutting of the new Youth Re-engagement Drop-in Center. Speakers included Montgomery County Council Vice President **Evan Glass**; Montgomery County Council President **Gabe Albornoz**; Executive Director, Montgomery County Collaboration Council, **Elijah Wheeler**; Chief of Services to End and Prevent Homelessness, DHHS **Amanda Harris**; Project Director, Montgomery County Collaboration Council, **Alycia Chuney**; and youth speaker, **Myeisha Garns**. The initial sponsors include **The David and Mikel Blair Family Foundation**, **Foundation Housing**, and **BETAH Associates**.

The MoCo ReConnect Drop-in Center is a unique approach in Montgomery County as the only dedicated youth space specifically centering the needs of youth ages 16-24; particularly those impacted by housing insecurity and homelessness, and those seeking meaningful employment and educational opportunities. MoCo ReConnect values youth as decision-makers in the design of the space and programming through the Youth Action Board.

As Alycia Chuney, Project Director at Montgomery County Collaboration Council, explained: "What's so exciting about the center is that it brings together a collaboration of agencies providing outreach, case management, education, housing assistance, and employment training for the first time, all under one roof."

Recognizing that Black, Latinx, and LGBTQIA+ young people are disproportionately impacted by systems that lead to disconnection from school and/or homelessness, the Collaboration Council, through MoCo ReConnect, ensures that providers offer culturally relevant programming and LGBTQIA service navigators, as well as access to laundry rooms, showers, and hot meals to create a safe and welcoming space for all. Informed and co-designed by community partners and a youth advisory board, the Drop-in Center is an entry point for the Montgomery County Continuum of Care.

"This is what Montgomery County is all about. It's about the fabric of our social safety net -- making sure that every organization, whether it's Collaboration Council or LAYC, and so many others, have a part to play in this," said Evan Glass, Council Vice President, who celebrated the event as part of his Pride Month activities.

The Montgomery County Collaboration Council is a 501(c)3 organization established in 1992 under Maryland State law and serves as the Local Management Board in Montgomery County. The Collaboration Council is a catalyst and nonpartisan broker of public and private funds, established to lead partnerships that support county youth and family programs and initiatives.

For more information about the Montgomery County Collaboration Council, please visit www.collaborationcouncil.org or call Peter Garza at (301) 610-0147 ext. 219.

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