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Safe Haven will meet unmet need in county, officials told

Thursday, October 6, 2005
Steve Hankins

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Proponents of a proposed eight-unit, permanent home for county residents who may have slipped through the mental-health or substance-abuse cracks met with area legislators at Kennett Wednesday.

Family Counseling Center's Chief Executive Officer Myra Callahan; Chief Financial Officer Shawn Sando and Chief Operations Officer Randy Ray spoke for an hour with Kennett Mayor Donald Parker; state Rep. Terry Swinger, D-Caruthersville; state Rep. Otto Bean, Jr., R-Holcomb; and state Sen. Rob Mayer, R-Dexter, to explain the center's plan for Safe Haven of Dunklin County.

"Many times, the people who will be served by Safe Haven are homeless, or are considered disruptive to the community," Callahan said. "Sometimes people who are problems in the community just have no stable environment and create problems."

"This is an unmet need," she continued. "Our eight bed facility's goal is to work people into active treatment and stabilize them in the community."



From left, state Rep. Otto Bean, R-Holcomb; Missouri Rep. Terry Swinger, D-Caruthersville; Family Counseling Center Chief Executive Officer Myra Callahan; Family Counseling Center Chief Operations Officer Randy Ray; state Sen. Rob Mayer, R-Dexter; and Family Counseling Center Chief Financial Officer Shawn Sando discuss the Safe Haven project Wednesday at the Kennett Country Club. [\[Click to enlarge\]](#)



Safe Haven will be staffed around the clock to ensure residents' safety and comfort levels, Callahan said. The residence will be located near the early release detention center, Sando added.

The proposed program has the formal support of the Dunklin County Commission, and already received approximately \$657,000 in Housing and Urban Development dollars.

Callahan said the center seeks nearly \$500,000 more from an assortment of funding streams, including about \$95,000 from the Federal Home Loan Bank and \$200,000 from the Community Block Development Grant program.

The program might have missed out on \$150,000 from the Missouri Housing Trust Fund because of logistics, the CEO noted.

"The total cost for this project is close to \$1 million," she said. "Of course, we need all the help that we can get locally, and in Jefferson City.

"Our public officials and legislators here always have been very good to us," she continued. "We look forward to providing housing and vocational supports, in addition to a mentoring program of procovery for our clients."

Bean noted the project is a proactive alternative to lives of homelessness and hopelessness.

"All three of us voted against the Medicaid Reform bill," Bean said. "We were against budget cuts that would have limited mental health treatment.

"We know how important mental health treatment is to our area," he added. "This is a project worthy of our best efforts."

Swinger agreed.

"Not only will Safe Haven provide a safety net for our region, it will help in reducing the unemployment rate in the area by creating new jobs that might be just right for some displaced workers," Swinger said. "We understand Safe Haven will be built with service in mind, and we back that unconditionally."

Parker assured Callahan that the City of Kennett is eager to see the facility come to fruition.

"Just let me know what you folks need and we'll do everything we can to help," the mayor said.

The eight-unit complex will be staffed by a full-time case manager who will oversee the residents' primary health care-needs, a number of treatment technicians and facility maintenance personnel, Sando said. Safe Haven will be built on about three acres so that a modicum of privacy might be expected for the tenants, and for the community as well, Callahan noted.

She added that ribbon-cutting ceremonies probably will take place in 2006.

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