

Guymon DAILY HERALD

A big 'Thank You' from the Youth Shelter Board

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By Katie Martire, editor@ptsi.net

A little hard work and dedication really pays off and thanks to the Texas County Coalition's Youth Shelter Service Planning Board, the evidence is shining through.

After the Texas County Coalition conducted a Community Needs Survey two years ago, the need for a youth shelter in this area was evident. They began the Youth Shelter Service Planning Board more than a year ago, which has taken the survey and made it a reality by completing the construction on the Emergency Youth Shelter and currently seeking licensing to open the much needed establishment.

Children being taken from their homes is a traumatic event in itself, having to be taken to Woodward or Oklahoma City to the nearest youth shelter simply adds more strain on the child, many times the shelter is full or the children must be moved due to local children taking precedence. Many times, siblings are separated due to the limited availability. With the child/children so far from home, this also causes financial burdens on the family as well as the Department of Human Service and law enforcement staff who must travel across state taking the children to their next destination.

The Coalition has collaborated with other service agencies in our community to develop resources to provide a shelter to house children birth to 18 years of age who are in need of emergency protection due to abuse, neglect, voluntary parental placement and other unforeseen situations within the family.

The City of Guymon has leased a property, located at 216 NW 4th St., to the Coalition at a low cost.

Since obtaining the property, the Youth Shelter Service Planning Board has obtained a \$35,000 HUD grant and have raised about \$25,000. The "Valentine's Day Murder/Mystery Dinner", held at Pickle Creek last month, raised about \$12,000. However, at least \$60,000 is needed for the first year of operations. The shelter will be able to house 4-6 children.

"We considered that event a huge success," said Board member Christie Hale. "We hope we can do it again next year."

The Youth Board has been diligently working to go through all of the proper steps to get the shelter on its' feet.

"The City of Guymon owns that building and are leasing it to us at a very low cost," said Youth Shelter Board Chairman Rachel Jones. "We used grant money from the Department of Commerce/HUD, it was a \$35,000 Emergency Shelter Grant, in order to remodel the facility. Many different community people and local businesses donated time and materials to help us put the building together for that price."

The shelter has been remodeled and is ready for use, the Board is now working on licensing but are unsure of exactly how long it will take to open the establishment.



The Youth Shelter Service Planning Board gathered last week at the upcoming Youth Shelter, located at 216 NW 4th St., to take a look at the newly remodeled facility as well as take a quick picture to tell the community and sponsors Thank You for all of their help to make this become a reality.

Licensed Professional Counselor Judy Stedje is the first employee for the upcoming youth shelter. Judy filled the Position of Texas County Planning Specialist, which will entail duties to further develop the program to completion. "Judy will be coordinating some of the services and providing counseling for us," continued Jones. "Currently we are working on licensing. Eventually we will be able to employ a program director."

The next fundraiser, a gold tournament, sponsored by EOG, which will go to benefit the shelter, will be held the first weekend in April.

"We would really like to thank the community, surrounding communities and our sponsors for helping with this project as well as the murder/mystery dinner," concluded Hale.

Sponsors include: PTCI Travis Clark, EOB, Panhandle furniture, Standfield Printing Co., Guymon Furniture, Spark's Electric, Custom Comfort, Ed's Carpet Land, Pete Guenther, House Siding, McMichael's Plumbing, Byers Professional Painting, Trademark Construction, Joe's Custom Concrete, Al's Fire Protection, Eagan's Warehouse, Lumber Mart Gary Adams, Panhandle Printing, First National Bank of Hooker, KKBS Radio, Steve Long, Hunny's, Bank of the Panhandle, Pub on the Bricks and Kristy Patterson and Cast.

To make a contribution to the Emergency Shelter Project, send donations to Guymon Community Enrichment Foundation, earmarked for Emergency Youth Shelter, 102 S. East St., Guymon, OK, 73942, or call (580) 338-8792 for more information.