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Seniors Now Have a Safe Haven in Sacramento

By Michael A. Piekarz
Staff Writer

Sacramento County Adult Protective Services Manager Elizabeth Foster-Ward calls them the forgotten population.

As a society, we revere our elders. Yet many fall through the cracks — falling victim to family or caregivers ill-equipped or unwilling to care for this most vulnerable of populations.

Thanks to HomeAid Sacramento, Lennar Homes, Mercy Housing and the North State Building Industry Association, Volunteers of America will now be able to offer a comfortable, safe and caring haven designed especially for the needs of abused and neglected seniors who find themselves in need of emergency shelter as they prepare to transition to more appropriate living situations.

The Sacramento Senior Safe House (SSSH) is now open. [Spectrum cover: "Senior Safe House Nears Completion," Feb. 10, 2009 (No. 6)]

On July 23, representatives of the Sacramento Senior Safe House project leaders, as well as their invited guests, celebrated the completion of this unique, six-bedroom residential shelter at a special dedication ceremony.

Lennar Homes served as HomeAid's pro-bono "Builder Captain" for this project, coordinating the construction of this critically needed facility.

"We take our commitment to bettering the community we serve very seriously," said Dale Billy, Lennar division president. "We are extremely proud of the Sacramento Senior Safe House and enjoyed being able to participate in such a worthwhile cause. Giving back to our community through programs like HomeAid is just one of the very many ways we demonstrate our dedication to helping the people we serve."

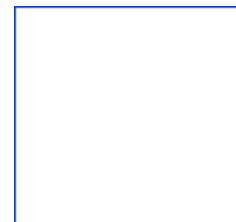
This will be the fifth project collaboration between Lennar and HomeAid in the Sacramento area.

Mercy Housing purchased the SSSH property more than 10 years ago and has managed the planning and land development of this project during that time. Mercy staff oversaw the architecture, engineering and design processes that culminated in securing building permits.

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In addition to donating its time and resources, Mercy has also applied for and received several large grants that have funded the construction of this project.

HomeAid Sacramento, through the generosity of the Lennar Charitable Housing Foundation, as well as its in-kind donors from the North State Building Industry Association, provided more than 50 percent of the remaining construction costs.

Volunteers of America — in partnership with the Sacramento Senior Safe House board of directors — will operate the home 24 hours a-day, seven days a week. Referrals for the seniors who will reside at the safe house will come from Sacramento County's Adult Protective Services division.

The 4,783-square-foot residential facility provides a safe place for abused and neglected seniors age 62 and older to receive as many as 90 days of shelter. The Sacramento Senior Safe House, the first facility of its kind west of the Mississippi River, is distinguished from other emergency shelter options by its home-like environment. These special touches include senior-created original art on the walls, brightly painted accent walls in each bedroom and volunteer-stitched handmade quilts for each bed.

"It brings me to tears to realize that this is finally happening," said founder Maxine Milner Krugman, a Sacramento County senior citizens advocate who has been lobbying for a senior safe house for a decade.

"I have seen horrifying things; cases that just broke my heart," she added.

"I just felt something needed to be done," said Krugman, a former chair of the county's Adult and Aging Commission.

With thanks to Krugman and her vision — and the donations of many — seniors will now have a safe house in Sacramento.

For more information on the Sacramento Senior Safe House, call (916) 442-3691.

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