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FEATURED

St. Peter shelter finishing more rooms, upgrading security

By Brian Arola barola@mankatofreepress.com

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People tour the facilities at the new Union Street Place homeless shelter in St. Peter.

File photo



ST. PETER — The motel turned homeless shelter in St. Peter will soon have more rooms available and increased security.

Partners for Affordable Housing opened most of its Union Street Place shelter in late September with plans to complete additional rooms in the following months.

Executive Director Jen Theneman said one more emergency shelter room and two more transitional housing rooms could be open within the next two weeks.

The additions would bring the total number of shelter rooms to seven and transitional rooms to six. Another room once used as the motel caretaker's apartment was recently converted into commons space for staff and guests.

Along with the nearly complete renovations, the shelter will receive new security cameras in February. Partners received a \$6,200 grant from the Open Your Heart to the Hungry and Homeless organization for the project.

The equipment will replace existing cameras at the motel, which Theneman estimated were probably 10 to 15 years old. They could only capture the parking lot, provided fuzzy visuals and couldn't record video evidence to help during potential investigations.

For a nonprofit often serving clients fleeing domestic violence situations, the new security measures will help the nonprofit create a safer environment for clients, Theneman said.

"There's just some reassurance I guess by having those," she said. "It feels more secure when you know someone is watching in case something did happen."

The grant from Open Your Heart to the Hungry and Homeless was the latest of consistent funding distributed to Mankato nonprofits. Partners received \$5,336 for food storage and security equipment at its Mankato shelters in 2017.

Kristen Becker, Partners communications manager, said the shelter also has received community support from groups including the Boy Scouts of America, Gustavus Adolphus College professors and church volunteers. One group plans to donate a playset

this spring, she said.

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