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FEATURED

## Organizers aim to fill bus with donations to help Partners for Housing

By Edie Schmierbach [eschmierbach@mankatofreepress.com](mailto:eschmierbach@mankatofreepress.com)

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This bus will be making the rounds Dec. 16 in in Mankato and North Mankato to collect donations that benefit the nonprofit Partners for Housing, which combats homelessness.

Courtesy Scott Weilage



MANKATO — The “Do Good Bus” will be making rounds Wednesday to collect toys, games, gift cards and household cleaning products for distribution to families and individuals experiencing homelessness or having financial difficulties that affect their housing options.

“When Scott Weilage and Amy Klughertz offered their help last week, we were overwhelmed with gratitude,” said Kirsten Becker, communications manager for Partners for Housing, the designated nonprofit for the holiday drive.

Klughertz, Forward Business and Professional Consulting owner, and Weilage, Wealth Centers of America CEO, met early last week to brainstorm ideas for using the promotional bus to help the mission of Partners for Housing.

“Homelessness is a foundational area for interest for me,” said Klughertz, who’s worked on a similar project.

She previously helped provide “welcome bags” to residents of local shelters, so they could have the “dignity of new pajamas, undergarments and hygiene products.”

“It must be demoralizing to not have your fundamental needs met and provide them for your family. How do you climb out of that defeat without a hand up and some hope?”

Stuff the Bus collections are scheduled at various Mankato and North Mankato sites.

“It might sound like a lofty goal, but if we could fill the bus, that would be great,” Weilage said.

He hopes the campaign also brings awareness about Partners for Housing and its programs to the public — and a bit of holiday fun to the community.

Partners for Housing — formerly Partners for Affordable Housing — is the parent agency for the Theresa House, Welcome Inn and Union Street Place shelters. The nonprofit also assists formerly homeless people transition into housing. About 250 people in the area daily use Partners’ various programs.

Donors may choose to drop off items prior to Dec. 16 at participating businesses, or they may meet up with the green-and-silver, double-decker bus at one of its various collection points in Mankato and North Mankato. Donations of cash and checks made out to “Partners for Housing” also will be accepted.

The bus schedule for donation pickup on Dec. 16 is:

- 9:45-10 a.m. — Wealth Centers of America/North Risk Partners, 40 Good Counsel Drive.
- 10:10-10:30 a.m. — Optivus Physical Therapy, 1681 Commerce Drive.
- 10:40-11 a.m. — Frandsen Bank and Trust, 245 Belgrade Ave.
- 11:10-11:30 a.m. — Pub 500, 500 South Front St., Mankato
- 11:40 a.m. to noon — Bellissimo Painting, 417 N. Riverfront Drive.
- 12:10-12:30 p.m. — United Prairie Bank, 10 Firestone Drive.
- 12:45-1 p.m. — Partners for Housing, 151 Good Counsel Drive.

Becker suggests donors use laundry baskets to tote gifts to the bus. She and co-workers will gift wrap the “fun gifts” — such as toys and games — before the donations are distributed to recipients.

She also offered guidelines for people who do not want to go out to purchase gifts: A monetary donation of \$50 would provide gifts for a family with three members and \$100 for a five-member family.

For a list of suggested donations or for more information about the drive, visit: [partnersforhousing.org/bundle](https://partnersforhousing.org/bundle).

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