



Eric Paul Zamora / The Fresno Bee

Dignitaries, guests and participants of Madera Rescue Mission programs gather before the ribbon-cutting ceremony for Madera Rescue Mission's new 20-bed family shelter Thursday. The first family, a family of five, is expected to move in on April 15.

More shelter for Madera's homeless

20-bed facility will help keep families from being separated.

By Charles McCarthy / The Fresno Bee

04/06/07 04:43:47

In a bid to help keep families together as parents struggle to overcome homelessness, the Madera Rescue Mission on Thursday dedicated a new 20-bed family shelter.

Inside are four apartments that will be an alternative to the men's and women's facilities.

The first family -- a woman and her four children -- will move in April 15, said Pastor Cliff Mullins, the mission's executive director. Without the family shelter, the woman's 14-year-old son would have had to live separately in the men's facility because of his age, Mullins said.

The family shelter adds beds to a mission that had been equipped to house up to 115 homeless people each night in southeast Madera. The mission also has 35 men and women in a 12-month residency program known as the discipleship program.

The new family shelter has two 1,200-square-foot apartments with three bedrooms each, and two 900-square-foot apartments with two bedrooms each. The bedrooms each have two beds. They will be reserved for men or women with children, or for married couples.

"This is about 10 times nicer-looking than where I live," said Mullins, who lives in what once was a Madera doctor's office.

About \$600,000 in federal and state grant money provided the start for the family shelter, Mullins said. Granite Construction Co. of Fresno saved the mission an estimated \$200,000 by installing sewers, waterlines and paving. Labor and materials were donated. Some of the mission's discipleship residents helped with the work.

Jose Garcia, 48, has been in the program since June. He had been involved in construction work in Madera. But he said he had a problem with drinking and drugs.

"I decided to change my life, and so I came here," Garcia said.

As a volunteer, Garcia helped with cement work and framing on the new facility. He's divorced, so family matters aren't a concern for him while he rebuilds his life, Garcia said.

All the furniture in the new building was donated. Anita and Marvin Keys of Madera donated sheets, pillowcases and blankets for all the beds. Shinen Landscape of Madera gave \$23,000 worth of landscaping and labor, Mullins said.

"We can't afford to buy it," Mullins said.

Verenice Carrillo, 30, of Chowchilla completed the discipleship program in December and stayed on as a mission staff member. Her problem was methamphetamines, she said.

In the mission's dining room, which was expanded as part of a 2005 project, she talked about completing the 12-month program "to get sober and stay sober."

Now, with methamphetamine out of her life, Carrillo said that she wants her 14-year-old daughter to stay at the mission with her. The teen lives with her father and stepmother but visits regularly.

Before the dedication Thursday, Mullins showed a drawing of a 32-bed women's emergency shelter he expects to begin building this summer with a \$1 million federal-state grant.

The need just keeps growing, he said.

The reporter can be reached at cmccarthy@fresnobee.com or (559) 675-6804.