

## DuPage PADS gets grant for apartments

By Meg McSherry Breslin  
Tribune staff reporter

DuPage PADS has offered the homeless a place to sleep at night through dozens of temporary shelters at area churches for more than 20 years.

But the group decided it wasn't doing enough. So now the non-profit agency is moving in a new direction—with more permanent housing instead of just a nightly stopgap.

The Illinois Housing Development Authority this week awarded DuPage PADS an \$800,000 grant, allowing the group to buy an apartment building in Naperville, providing 11 units for homeless families and individuals. As a result, DuPage PADS will soon have 33 permanent apartments, up from none three years ago.

"We've really reinvented ourselves from managing homelessness to having a commitment to end homelessness," said Carol Simler, executive director of DuPage PADS, whose goal is to end homelessness in the region.

The organization began its push toward permanent housing three years ago, after realizing that so many of its shelter clients were caught in an endless pattern of moving from one nightly shelter to another, without the time or resources to get out of homelessness.

Through a two-year, \$619,276 federal grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, DuPage PADS has helped cover the cost of leasing apartments for 21 homeless single people in the western suburbs over the last two years. PADS is in the process of seeking additional funds from HUD, Simler said.

The new state grant allows for 11 more apartments—including three units for families, she said. By 2010, the agency hopes to have at least 50 apartments available. Many homeless agencies have offered temporary housing of up to two years. But with these new permanent units, there's no deadline for residents to move out.

As for rent, residents won't be expected to pay more than 30 percent of any income they receive—such as Social Security payments. The remaining amount will be subsidized by the DuPage Housing Authority through housing vouchers.

PADS also will offer counseling, job training and coaching to help break the homeless-shelter cycle. The state grant marks the first time DuPage PADS has bought property for housing.

County officials praised PADS for its efforts.

"We talk about housing being a ladder, with working people starting up a ladder toward better housing. PADS has always been at the bottom rung, but now they're going to provide services to bring people to the next level," said John Day, executive director of the DuPage Housing Authority.

The new building, at 5 Olympus Drive—south of downtown Naperville—will undergo minor renovations before homeless residents begin moving in within three to four months, Simler said.

Simler said PADS won't abandon its nightly shelters at more than 130 congregations.

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