

03/23/09 Need for shelter renovations is announced

Deacon Tim Reilly, Director of Administration for the Diocese of Green Bay, announced today the plan to make improvements to St. John the Evangelist Homeless Shelter and to apply for the necessary building and conditional use permits. The shelter operates in the gymnasium of the former St. John School in downtown Green Bay. Here are his remarks from today's press conference:

The commitment of the Catholic Church to shelter the homeless is manifest in the ministry of St. John the Evangelist Homeless Shelter. This past season, we have served approximately 37 people each night which is about the same number of people served last season. Our collaboration with other social service agencies has proven to be fruitful in that we have assisted 60 of our homeless brothers and sisters, or 25% of those who have stayed at the Shelter, to move on to a more permanent housing solution. We will continue to work with each individual as a child of God, requiring us to be empathetic as we help them take the next step in his or her life.

The Shelter faces a difficult situation for its continued operation after April 30, 2009. Throughout this past shelter season, we have been nursing a heating system that is old and in need of replacement. God has been good to us and we have been able to get through the year with only one short interruption of providing heat to the facility. In order to ensure stable care in this homeless ministry, we need to make some significant renovations to this facility which is over 70 years old. Between now and November 1, 2009, we will:

- replace the current heating system
- undertake hazardous material abatement inherent with working with old heating systems
- fix the leaky roofs
- replace the remaining 70-year-old windows which are extremely inefficient and leaky
- install a sprinkler system in compliance with state safety codes
- refurbish the restrooms and shower facilities
- make adjustments to part of the school building so that we can potentially accommodate a daytime warming shelter

At this point in time, we have received all of the necessary approvals from the parish and the Shelter corporation. We are confident of final diocesan approval on April 3. This week, we are commencing a process to obtain necessary building permits and to apply for a multi-year conditional use permit from the City of Green Bay. We will also undertake fund-raising to pay for these renovations. People of all faiths and walks of life have been tremendously supportive of the Shelter and we anticipate that we will receive a generous response given the profound impact that our ministry has on so many individuals who have no place else to turn.

Time is of the essence. We will only have a 6-month window of opportunity to complete this renovation project. We will work collaboratively with the city, other social service agencies, and our neighbors. Through the grace and providence of God, we are confident that the project will be accomplished.

Gifts to help the shelter renovation can be sent to:

St. John the Evangelist Shelter • 413 St. John Street • Green Bay, WI 54301-4116