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## Aid For Friends begins renovation on new Pocatello shelter

Aid For Friends, Idaho Housing and Finance Association, and their community partners gathered Thursday to start the renovation process on Pocatello's new homeless shelter. Construction crews will begin work to transform the Pocatello's former City Hall into a community center and shelter for those experiencing homelessness in the area.

For the past 30 years, Aid For Friends has operated out of a single-family, three-story home built in the 1930s, making it difficult for the nonprofit to serve those experiencing homelessness in the community. The shelter has operated at 114 percent capacity in the past year. The new shelter, at 209 E. Lewis St., will provide appropriate living quarters for men, women, and families. It will include a dining area, laundry facilities, and space for education and workforce development opportunities.

"Our current shelter is just too small for the needs of this community. This new facility will finally provide us the space to give appropriate and acceptable accommodations. One of the greatest features is to have this new facility completely ADA compliant," said BJ Stensland, executive director for Aid For Friends. "It feels incredible to finally envision a place where people can actually sit down at tables and enjoy their dinner, have somewhere they can go to relax, and have space for our workforce development training. This is an exciting opportunity for the people of our community."

Aid For Friends is the only emergency shelter for women, men and families in the region, which has Idaho's second-highest concentration of those experiencing homelessness. The new shelter anticipates serving almost 1,000 Southeast Idaho residents each year who may be facing or experiencing homelessness.

"It's important for communities to have a place where those who may be facing a housing crisis can go to access resources and shelter in their time of need. This new Aid For Friends facility provides not only a place where men, women, and families can go, but also a place where they can access tools to help them gain self-sufficiency," said Gerald Hunter, president of Idaho Housing and Finance Association. "Community partnerships like this are essential in building something we feel will heal and restore the lives of many of those experiencing homelessness in Southeast Idaho."

The new shelter would not have been possible without support and financial contributions from a number of community partners that include Bannock County, Citizens Community Bank, City of Chubbuck, City of Pocatello, Housing Alliance and Community Partnerships, Idaho Central Credit Union, Idaho Housing and Finance Association, Laura Moore Cunningham Foundation, ON Semiconductor, Pleasant Valley Investments, United Way of Southeastern Idaho, and Wells Fargo.

"No one wakes up in the morning saying, 'I want to be homeless.' Unfortunately in our community, we do have those who are struggling to find shelter and need somewhere to go during that transition," said Amy Rhoads, president and CEO of Citizens Community Bank. "We feel fortunate that we are able to give back to the community by helping to raise funds and allow those in need to be able to go somewhere during their time of need."

Aid For Friends still needs your help to turn this newly acquired space into a place where low-income and homeless families can go in times of crisis. Whether you make a donation, promote the campaign, or help spread the message, you can become one of the many community partners. Learn more at [aidforfriendspocatello.com](http://aidforfriendspocatello.com). Thank you for your help and much-needed support.