

VOLUNTEERS: *Spend time helping at Cairo Women's Center*

FROM PAGE 11A

and work on projects to help improve the community when they aren't studying. Youth mentoring and tutoring, as well as special projects such as the women's center, are just a few of the activities to which members give their time.

"These people do 900 hours of service in just one year," Rundblad said. "They don't have jobs. This is what they do."

The center is being built through a collaboration of many people, but the Glenn Poshard Foundation for Abused Children is spearheading the \$600,000 project.

The new building is at the corner of Ninth and Cedar streets, next to the current shelter. Rundblad said it will not be open for a few months. But when construction is complete, it will provide a much safer and more accommodating facility than the current one, which was built in 1982 and has many problems, both inside and out.

Though experts may have to be called in for electrical and plumbing work on the new shelter, some of the students already have the skills needed to complete various pieces of work alone.

'We just want to help. Everyone should get involved in this type of program.'

TORI COLLINS
AMERICORPS VOLUNTEER

Ben Hunter, a senior in plant and soil sciences at SIUC, specializes in landscaping design and helped direct his fellow workers as to how plants should be arranged, how much soil was needed and where mulch should be laid to prevent weeds from sprouting.

The group landscaped the front of the property in June, but it had been overgrown with weeds and needed to be spruced up.

Hunter has spent two years with AmeriCorps. He said that with current federal cutbacks to funding, AmeriCorps, nationally, has suffered. The SIUC chapter's budget was cut in half this year, so Hunter

bought some mums with his own money to be planted around the home. The group also found a pile of free mulch behind the center. The mulch was from a ground-up tree that was removed after a May tornado knocked it down and caused it to crash into the current women's shelter.

"We just have to make do with what we have," Hunter said.

Chandra Price has worked at the current shelter for 20 years and said she sees firsthand how much a new shelter is needed. Currently, there are six bedrooms and three bathrooms in the center, and Price said there are not only problems with the plumbing, but also structural problems that need to be addressed because of safety concerns.

"It'll make a tremendous difference," Price said, adding that lights and cameras will be added to the new facility for security and safety protection. "The environment is going to be better."

She said a portion of the ceiling above the main office fell at one point and had to be replaced.

"I thank God one of those kids didn't come through the door when that happened," Price said.

Doorways to nearly 35 rooms line the halls of the new shelter. Doors will be added later, and the rooms will accommodate battered women and children suffering from domestic violence, as well as homeless women. The facility will also provide laundry and cooking spaces, as well as a children's room, just like the current shelter.

There will also be areas for private counseling, and services will be offered to help women handle issues such as court and medical advocacy. A support group also will be offered, and a crisis hot line will be operated out of the facility.

Collins said AmeriCorps is very rewarding to her, personally. She said the feeling of being able to contribute so much to various communities drives her to dedicate so much of her time. As for driving to Cairo Saturday, Collins said it had a lot to do with Poshard's foundation, but it's also another way of giving back to the community.

"We just want to help," she said. "Everyone should get involved in this type of program."

brian.peach@thesouthern.com
618-529-5454 x15816

Volunteer spends time helping at Cairo Women's Center

During her service with AmeriCorps, Ms. Collins worked with former Illinois Senator Glenn Poshard with building the Cairo's Women Center

Clipped By:



toricollori

Wed, Jun 13, 2018