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Helping a shelter feel like home

 [Angie Mason](#), amason@ydr.com 3:17 p.m. EDT August 9, 2016



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Jan Wilson, director of the York Rescue Mission's Single Women and Children's Shelter, poses for a portrait in the newly painted and remodeled lobby of the shelter. YTI Career Institute has an ongoing relationship with the shelter to provide repairs and maintenance. (Photo: Jeff Lautenberger, For The York Daily Record) Buy Photo

The York Rescue Mission has been working to make sure its shelter for women and children is not just a place women bounce in and out of when they hit trouble.

The shelter's new intention, said director Jan Wilson, is to work with women longer, help them set goals and really be prepared for independent living when they leave.

But the shelter itself, on Jefferson Avenue in York, wasn't really feeling like home. It needed cosmetic improvements, as

well as some pretty substantial work on things like electrical systems and more.

"We just needed repairs in every avenue," Wilson said.

But repairs are costly. After some brainstorming, she called YTI Career Institute to see if anyone there could help. Wilbur Brown, lead faculty for the heating, air conditioning and refrigeration program, stopped by to see what needed to be done.



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It's the kind of connection that works well for YTI students, he said. They get experience doing real-world work. And for the shelter, it cuts out a major part of the cost of getting work done -- the labor.

In the past two months, students from the heating, air conditioning and refrigeration program as well as the electrical program have swept through the shelter. They've repaired air conditioning units, repaired and replaced lights that had left portions of the shelter dark, and tended to outlets that were shorting out.



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Wilbur Brown, lead faculty for the Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Program at YTI Career Institute, points out a newly installed smoke and carbon monoxide detector in the Single Women and Children's Shelter run by the York Rescue Mission. YTI students partnered with the York Rescue Mission to complete repairs and maintenance as part of an externship program for class credit. (Photo: Jeff Lautenberger, For The York Daily Record)

They expect to keep the relationship going. Students will be installing a new security system and replacing the air conditioning in the building next to the shelter. Wilson said the electrical students seem to hardly stop working.

"I mean, all I have too is call and they come," she said.

Brown said that YTI has experienced instructors who ensure the work is being done properly.

"It allows shelter to be able to get this work done ... it's a savings to them," he said.

When new lighting went in, Wilson said, she could tell it gave residents a new sense of pride and ownership in the building.

"It shows them the community supports them. I think it's lifted their spirits," she said.

Meanwhile, Wilson said, the shelter has been given a full makeover, too. Drab white walls have been given colorful paint jobs, and small touches like new artwork and decorations make the space feel more like home.

Women were previously assigned to rooms with numbers, but now they've been given names like "hope" or "compassion." The residents operate as a family, with everyone assigned chores posted on boards outside their rooms.

Wilson said that when women in need call the shelter, she tries to assure them that they'll be fine. And now, she said, when they arrive, they find a space they say feels nice and safe.

"It just has that really homey, family kind of touch now," she said.

Want to help?

The York Rescue Mission's Women and Children's Shelter is always in need of the following items:

full-sized sheet sets

diapers, mostly size 4 and 5

flip flops

trash bags

paper goods

food, especially sliced bread, creamer, ketchup, mayonnaise and syrup

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