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Community Pulls Together to Repair Shelter

## BY YVONNE GALE: SPECIAL TO THE PILOT

Sometimes a vision can become a reality. Friend to Friend's shelter for domestic violence and sexual assault victims was in need of a major renovation after 18 years of providing shelter to over 2,000 women and children.

What was needed? Furniture, new carpet and padding, painting, storm doors, replacing rotting wood on the porch, handicap ramp and playground equipment, landscaping -- the list went on and on. Making every dollar count to serve victims has always made it a challenge to repair and update the shelter.

But, in May 2008, the shelter's new manager, Anne Friesen, had a vision to involve the community -- churches, businesses, civic organizations, and individuals -- to give donations and volunteer time and services to repair and renovate the shelter to become not just a place to reside, but a place that feels more like a home, a place where incoming clients could feel safer, more comfortable, and more nurtured to start the healing process.

In September 2008, United Way started the work of renovating the shelter with 15 volunteers during its Day of Caring Event. Friend to Friend's Executive Director Jackie Thamm applied for a grant from Emmanuel Episcopal Church for funding to buy supplies needed to make the necessary shelter repairs. A grant of \$3,500 was given to buy paint, lumber, storm doors, light fixtures, and furniture.

Emmanuel's grant money was "seed money," which was cultivated by other groups such as the Carpenters of Christ. Carpenters of Christ, a group of dedicated Christian men, are members of Emmanuel Baptist Church, located in Carthage.

Working several Saturdays, they installed storm doors, fixed kitchen cabinets and the flooring in the living room, built a new ramp and back porch, and painted rooms. Pastor Eugene Ussery said that he and his congregation believe that "the church should reach out to respond to needs to change lives."

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Other groups that volunteered time were the Designing Women from Pinehurst Presbyterian Church under the leadership of Betty Pope, who prepped and painted rooms. Helen and Richard Brigman organized Aberdeen Baptist Church men to refinish and paint the old playground equipment, prune the shrubs, and mow the lawn. Richard Brigman built outdoor shutters and a handmade wooden bench swing for the playground. He also replaced the fireplace mantel and painted the dining room.

Along with church groups, community groups such as the Moore County Cooperative Extension helped trim scrubs and trees, and the Moore County 4-H club, under the leadership of Linda Gore, cleaned up the shelter's yard and helped the shelter staff spread pine bark on the playground. Junior Vest, a volunteer fireman in Carthage, donated the pine bark.

Using the concept of the popular renovation program "Trading Spaces," Friesen sponsored a bedroom adoption project. Mother-daughter teams painted walls, trims, and ceilings, bought new furniture, bedding light fixtures, lamps, and pictures for the shelter's five bedrooms. These teams included Jackie Abell and her daughter, Alex; Judy Fedder and her daughters, Kate and Tory; and Fredenal Woronoff and her daughters, Jenna and Freddie.

Businesses and other individuals who donated services, accessories, bedding, pictures, and furniture for the bedroom adoption project included A Treasured Alley, Opulence of Southern Pines, Cottage Chic, Anne Holmes of Village Design, Mark Parson of Landscaper's Design, Aberdeen Paint, Sandhills Feed Supply Co., Caroline Packard, Carol Dowd of Botanicals, Elena Avila, Carol Butler, Nancy Ellis, and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Chapman.

One of the major needs of the shelter was new carpet.

Ted Rhoades, owner of Flooring America, of Pinehurst, and Tony Pestipino, vice president of Gulistan Carpets, teamed together to give the shelter a complete makeover.

When asked why he got involved, Rhoades said, "When I came out to the shelter to give a quote for replacing the carpet, I saw the need and felt compelled to get involved. Because of the mission of Friend to Friend, it was an easy sell to Gulistan Carpet. Tony Pestipino of Gulistan help make it all happen -- we participated to replace the padding and donated all new Stainmaster carpet for the entire shelter. It has made a tremendous difference in the look and feel of the place."

Meaghan Kelly, associate rector at Emmanuel Episcopal, summed up the community outreach effort: "We are thrilled to learn that Friend to Friend was able to take the church's outreach money and inspire even more generosity from volunteers and donors alike. We couldn't have possibly imagined that our gift would allow for so much to happen in their facility, and we think the level of community involvement in the project is remarkable and uplifting. We are grateful to have been part of this story!"

A total of 346 volunteer hours was donated for the shelter renovation.

"Friend to Friend was truly blessed to have such an enthusiastic community of volunteers," said Friesen. "The passion and excitement that they showed in their time and efforts became contagious. Friend to Friend thanks the community for its continued support to our agency and to United Way of Moore County. Anyone seeking information about donations or contributions to Friend to Friend may call 977-3333 or go to our Web site: [www.moorefriends.org](http://www.moorefriends.org)."