

A Healing home

Homeless men can sometimes seem invisible in a community, but women and their children in the same desperate situation are even harder to spot. Fortunately for them and for Raleigh, caring organizations won't let women with children be ignored. In Raleigh, the Healing Place is set to open a shelter in December that can house 88 women and up to 11 kids in a building off of Glenwood Avenue near Umstead State Park. It's a companion facility to the nonprofit's 180-bed facility for men near the State Farmers Market.

The women's shelter follows the impressive success of the men's program. The Healing Place released a survey recently that showed that nearly seven in 10 of the men who completed its program were still sober a year later.

That's partly due to the fact that if a person with a drinking problem is interested, the Healing Place will put them through a rigorous eight- to 14-month program that includes learning about addiction and requires addicts to earn their keep by doing chores at the facility. Residents who show increasing responsibility receive help finding a job and housing. Women will get help from Healing Place workers in being reunited with their children, many of whom are put in protective custody when Mom's life unravels.

It's hard work, made harder because neighborhoods often oppose such groups. In the case of the women's shelter, four other sites had to be abandoned before the current building was found. It is nine miles from downtown, which could be a hurdle to women trying to reach it. Other nonprofits as well as local governments may need to help solve the transportation issue.

Raleigh and Wake County already have given generously to the \$10 million building campaign, \$1 million by the county and \$500,000 from Raleigh. The allocations actually are investments in their people.

Durham has a similar program at the Durham Rescue Mission, which also recently opened a large facility to house and train women for good jobs. Durham's police and social services agencies refer homeless people to the mission, and rely on it routinely when the weather becomes unbearably hot or cold. More importantly, the Healing Place and the Rescue Mission are critical additions to government efforts to serve the down and out who are looking for a way up.

The Healing Place for men has been an innovative and inspiring effort that has community support that is well-earned. The addition of a facility for women and children is simply great news for those in need, and for this city and region.