

Beneficiaries, officials cheer Dottie's House expansion

\$1.6M expansion doubles housing available for abused women

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"They don't use the word 'victim,' because within these walls, women become survivors," she said.

The recently completed \$1.6 million expansion doubles the size of the existing apartment complex, adding nine apartments to the existing eight. Dottie's House founder and vice president, Carol A. Wolfe, wife of Assemblyman David W. Wolfe, R-Ocean, said the need for the program's services had become so great the staff had to turn women away.

Named for Carol Wolfe's mother, Dottie's House was created in 2001. It is partly meant to provide housing for women and children leaving abusive relationships, but it is not a short-term emergency shelter like some other facilities.

Rather, a major goal of Dottie's House is to help women regain their self-confidence and teach them the skills they need to survive on their own.

"Their journey here is difficult and very painful at times as they begin to recover from years, if not a lifetime, of abuse," said Deb Galletta, Dottie's House director, at Thursday's ceremony.

Several local and state officials came to the facility Thursday morning for the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Though the new apartments are complete, no one is living in the addition yet, and Wolfe said Dottie's House is interviewing prospective residents.

Brick Township Council President Stephen C. Acropolis was among those who spoke. Like Dottie's House staff members, Acropolis said he had mixed emotions, welcoming the new addition and the work the organization does but lamenting the fact that organizations such as Dottie's House are made necessary by the fact that domestic violence is so common.

"It's kind of a bittersweet day, because it's great to have these types of programs, but on the other hand, it's terrible to have to have these kinds of programs," Acropolis said.

But Cosenza said, for women and children escaping domestic violence, Dottie's House helps them rebuild their lives.

"My daughter is now 6 years old and has broken the cycle of violence," she said.

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(STAFF PHOTO: MICHAEL SYPNIEWSKI)
Carol A. Wolfe, founder and vice president of Dottie's House, shows one of the new three-bedroom apartments that have been added to the shelter for domestic violence victims.

THE ISSUE

Carol A. Wolfe, founder and vice president of Dottie's House, said the statistics on domestic violence are staggering.

In 2005, Wolfe said the New Jersey State Police Report there were 5,591 incidents in Ocean County. That's more than half of the total 10,840 reported crimes of all types. She said 2006 numbers haven't been released yet.

To learn more about Dottie's House or how to donate or volunteer, call 732-262-2009.