

Grant will help Dottie's House add nine units

By Brian McGinn

Carol Wolfe, the founder and current president of Dottie's House, a non-profit organization that runs a home for battered women, got some great news last Friday afternoon in Trenton.

During a press conference held by Gov. Jon Corzine and the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, Ms. Wolfe was informed the state would be giving Dottie's House a \$450,000 grant to help finish its current expansion project.

"We knew there were grants available and of course we applied for them, but even before the press conference we didn't know how much money we would be getting," Ms. Wolfe said this week. "They called us the day before and told us to be in Trenton, but they didn't tell us how much [money] we were being awarded."

Ms. Wolfe said as she was sitting there listening to Gov. Corzine speak about battered women and homeless families in the state, she was touched.

"When they announced we were getting \$450,000 I was shocked," she said. "I had a great weekend knowing we had [an extra \$450,000] in there."

In all, the state awarded over \$9 million to organizations that assist battered women and homeless people in New Jersey.

"The governor said something that we kind of use as a mantra at Dottie's House. 'These women may be battered, but they are not beaten,' Ms. Wolfe recalled. "That just fits so well with what we do at Dottie's House.

"It proves these women have the strength to take their lives back," she added.

The grant will allow Dottie's House to finish its expansion project, which will construct nine new apartments where battered women and their children live, away from their abusers. Currently there are eight apartments at Dottie's House.

"We are still short by about \$250,000, but we will be fine," Ms. Wolfe said. "We get so much support from the local community."

The founder of Dottie's House said ever since the plan for expansion started, things have really been going well.

"I really think this project is meant to be," she said. "Things seem to just be falling into place."

Dottie's House, which is located in a secure, undisclosed location in Ocean County, provides an in-house training program designed to develop emotional and financial independence for women who are victims of domestic violence.

As part of the program, women are accepted into the house, with their children, and given a chance to develop an independent lifestyle that is free of abuse.

Ms. Wolfe said all members of the house are subject to random drug tests and must enroll in one of the training programs offered by Dottie's House to prepare them to earn a living on their own.

Each occupant of the house must also take part in group and individual therapy sessions.

Ms. Wolfe said Dottie's House also offers its clients the assistance of experts in different fields, like credit counseling, for example, to teach the women about spending money wisely.

"Hopefully, with this expansion, we will not have to turn any more women away," Ms. Wolfe said.

Ms. Wolfe expects the nine new apartments to be completed by the middle of December, at which time a ribbon-cutting celebration will be held.

Dottie's House operates completely on donations from private citizens and business organizations, a number of fund-raisers throughout the year and, of course, grants from both the state and federal government.