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## Groundbreaking of Friendship House in Cottonwood sets path for completion in May



The Verde Valley Homeless Coalition breaks ground for a planned Friendship House in Cottonwood on Tuesday, Nov. 22. (VVN/Vyto Starinskas)

By PAIGE DANIELS and VYTO STARINSKAS, The Verde Independent

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Verde Valley Homeless Coalition has made tremendous progress in the past few years, especially with the new Friendship House that is being constructed on Main Street.

Just a few years ago, VVHC was operating out of a small office, only able to offer overnight accommodations on the cold nights of the year. Now, they are open 365 days a year and provide meals and overnight accommodations for up to 20 people.

“We went from a tiny operation with a part time manager and few volunteers to being almost always full,” said Secretary Laura Cox. “We probably see 200 or 300 different people every month.”



Cox said through COVID funds, the Friendship House idea was born. The Friendship House will allow a slightly more permanent residential space for people transitioning off the streets.



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at the Friendship House and if they are able to charge a small percentage for rent based on monthly income.

“We are focusing on transitional housing, which isn’t an overnight shelter,” Cox says. “It’s fairly permanent with your own space. You’ll have your own room, access to showers, a kitchen facility, and a safe place to go.”

On Tuesday, over 50 people gathered for the groundbreaking of the Friendship House. Many speeches were presented along with the cutting of the red ribbon and digging of dirt with shovels.

VVHC President Carol Quasula told the small group of dignitaries they will have six units of transitional housing and four units in the existing house, for a total of 10 units planned.

So when people get on their feet at the shelter next door, they can transition over here, she said at the event, which included a ceremonial throwing of a shovel of dirt.

Quasula said this was the first transitional housing center for homeless in the area. There is a partner organization that is opening a 32-unit affordable/transitional housing project in Cottonwood soon, she added.

“Affordable housing, as we all know, is an issue.”

She introduced John Jones, the project manager for the homeless coalition.

This project is made possible because of a lot of agencies, Jones said, including the City of Cottonwood, the State of Arizona, the federal government, the Homeless Coalition and the Department of Housing.

A fundraiser has been set up online for this new project. Currently, VVHC has raised \$6,000 of their \$33,000 goal.

“We have a fundraising campaign called ‘Put a Leaf on the Friendship House Tree of Life,’” Cox said. “What that means is your donation will buy ‘leaves.’ What the ‘leaves’ represent is what we took out of our original contract and decided to fund raise for

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For more information or to 'Put a Leaf on the Friendship House Tree of Life', visit [VerdeValleyHomelessCoalition.com](http://VerdeValleyHomelessCoalition.com).

Contact Paige Daniels at [pdaniels@-verdenews.com](mailto:pdaniels@-verdenews.com) or 928-634-2241, ext. 6033.

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