Schenectady

Bethesda House opens emergency shelter

By Sara FOSS Staff Writer

COVID-19 has forced local homeless shelters to create more space for clients, reducing the number of people they can serve on a nightly basis.

So one those shelters, Bethesda House in Schenectady, is opening a new, temporary shelter to boost the number of beds in the city.

The shelter will be located across the street from Bethesda House's headquarters at 834 State St., in State Street Presbyterian Church. It will be able to accommodate 18 people on beds set up in a large, spacious room known as Hamilton Hall, and will be staffed around-the-clock.

The goal is to open the shelter on Monday.

Guests "will be encouraged to shelter in place," staying on premises in accordance with social distance guidelines, Kimarie Sheppard, Bethesda House's executive director, said.

The shelter will be run by Bethesda House and the Schenectady County Department of Social Services. State Street Presbyterian already has a cooperative relationship with Bethesda House, which has several offices in the church and uses the church lot for parking.

"We're glad to share with them, and glad to support their work," said Rev. Sue Strang of State Street Presbyterian. "It's the right thing to do."

Strang added, "I cannot imagine dealing with this virus situation without a home to go to."

Sheppard said the need for the shelter will be reassessed every 30 days.

Bethesda House operates an emergency shelter that can take between 14 to 17 men and women at 834 State St.

The organization also provides more permanent housing to 16 people who live in apartments upstairs, nine people who live in scattered-site apartments and 10 people who reside at a duplex in the community.

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