



Gerry Melendez / The Idaho Statesman

Margo Henning, left, president of the District Council for St. Vincent de Paul, and Marie Hoff, executive director for Catholic Charities of Idaho, share a light-hearted moment while discussing Elizabeth Place, a new hospitality home in Boise designed to help homeless, low-income women and children.

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Elizabeth Place gives women a place to land

Low-income housing takes burden off residents as they pursue their goals

By Carissa Wolf
The Idaho Statesman

Boise's Elizabeth Place follows a long tradition of when it welcomes women through its doors.

"Elizabeth Place is named after three Elizabeths who, in many ways, were patrons of hospitality and charitable outreach to people, especially other women," explained Marie Hoff, executive director of Catholic Charities of Idaho.

There was St. Elizabeth, who according to the gospel account of the Visitation, welcomed Mary into her home. Mother Elizabeth Ann Seton, founder of the religious order of the Sisters of Charity, dedicated her life to the care of the poor. And Queen Elizabeth of 13th-century Hungary was known for her great charity and even welcomed a leper into her home.

In the charitable tradition of these Elizabeths, Catholic Charities of Idaho and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul recently opened Elizabeth Place, a home for low-income women.

Catholic church members throughout

Get involved

Help low-income women get back on their feet by making a donation of money, goods or services to Elizabeth Place. For information on how to help, call 345-6031.

the valley donated money, time and everything inside the home that helps financially struggling women become self-sufficient, organizers said.

Elizabeth Place serves single women, mothers-to-be and mothers with young children, regardless of their religious affiliation.

"There are many women who have goals and want to be self-sufficient, but they cannot because the cost of living has gone up," Hoff said.

Elizabeth Place helps those women get back on their feet by offering affordable housing and counseling while they pursue an education or job training.

Residents at Elizabeth Place are expected to pay between \$180 and \$200 a month in rent plus \$100 toward utilities to live at the home. Elizabeth Place directors say they hope donations will cover the rest of the home's monthly expenses.

That cheap rent ensures shelter for women who struggle due to no fault of

their own, said Margo Henning, program director for Elizabeth Place.

"One of the biggest impediment factors for people that do have low incomes is that they have to pay that huge (rent) deposit and it's just a huge mountain to climb," Henning said.

Elizabeth Place residents don't have to pay a deposit and can live in the home for two years or longer, depending on their circumstances.

And that's just what many women in the valley need, organizers said. The four-bedroom home on the corner of Emerald and Roosevelt streets filled up shortly after it opened Aug. 2.

"It speaks to the need for this kind of transitional service," Hoff said.

Henning said single dads and intact families also are in need of shelter and affordable housing. But few organizations offer the housing services for those groups.

Henning and Hoff said they hope area churches will help fill in those gaps and look to Elizabeth Place as a model for affordable housing.

"It need not be a multimillion dollar project," Hoff said.

At IdahoStatesman.com

Link to Catholic Charities of Idaho and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul