

VETERANS: 11 of 13 spots already filled at residence

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And we like Beverly.”

The Doyles had to get special permission to move in as a couple, but they were there yesterday as the North Shore Veterans Counseling Services formally opened a new Broadway location for homeless veterans. It's meant to provide housing for up to 13 people, said executive director Lynn Pellino. Before the cover came off the new sign, 11 people had already moved in.

Many are Vietnam veterans who pay \$700 a month. A lot of that can be subsidized by various state and federal programs, Pellino said.

“We cater strictly to veterans, she said.

Firm rules — no drugs and no alcohol — keep out some.

“A lot of people don't want to give them up,” she said.

“She's a great landlord,” said resident Tom Anderson, a Vietnam veteran. “She's tough, but she's good.”

Yesterday, residents, officers of the North Shore Veterans Counseling Services and representatives from the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the city, the state and organizations including Salem State University gathered on the wide porch



KEN YUSZKUS/Staff photo

From left, Beverly veterans agent Jerry Guillebbe, Kristine Babcock, veterans co-ordinator at North Shore Community College, and Don MacQuarrie, vice president of Beverly Co-operative Bank which financed the project, speak inside the new North Shore Veterans Counseling Service Center home.

to observe the opening of the new home. Counseling Services board member Victor Capozzi outlined the history of the project, explaining how his group swapped housing above the former Press Box on Park Street for this place, moving just across Rantoul Street to do it.

Capozzi called it “horse trading” with developer Lee Dellicker, president of Windover Construction, which has plans for a new building with apartments and shops at the veterans services group's former Park Street location.

Capozzi credited

colleague Chuck Clarke, the clerk of the works, with “figuring out” how to put plumbing in every room.

“It's right up to par,” he said, adding that the process was stressful.

For his part, Clarke cited the impact of Gold Star mom the late Christine McDonald, who became immersed in veterans issues locally.

“She recruited myself and Victor,” Clarke said.

Her son, Donald Contarino, a helicopter pilot, was killed in Vietnam on Aug. 14, 1969, during a rocket attack.

“He was my best friend,” Clarke said.

Massachusetts secretary for veterans affairs, U. S. Marine veteran Coleman Nee, noted that American involvement in

the Vietnam War began half a century ago. He lamented the ill treatment a lot of those returning warriors received in years past and declared, “It may be 50 years late, but thank you so much for your service. ... People that serve the country in uniform have earned benefits that others have not.”

Nee praised this project in particular saying, “I especially love it because it's in the community.”

“It's a large obligation we have,” echoed city councilor and mayoral candidate Wesley Slate, “and it's part of what we do here.”

Speaking later, Clarke, a Vietnam veteran himself, praised the community feel of the new housing.

“It's so much better looking than the other building,” he said.

The residents, cooking in the common kitchen, interact, even inviting their fellow residents to share a meal.

“The whole group has come together as a family,” Clarke said.

Vietnam veterans can sit, talk and relax on the porch with more recent veterans, added Capozzi, who also served in Vietnam.

“I wanted it to have a home feel,” he added. “I don't like warehousing people.”

Capozzi estimated the cost of renovations at \$210,000. Among those chipping in to help were Home Depot and Beverly Cooperative Bank.

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