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## Nonprofit looks to help \$50M project for Detroit's homeless with volunteer housewarming parties

"Home is where the heart is."

That age-old saying is the basis of a new **Neighborhood Service Organization** campaign to help those less fortunate turn their future apartments into "homes."

The private nonprofit human service agency's "A Place to Call Home" campaign hopes to collect new household items for its **NSO Bell Building**, which is currently under a **\$50 million renovation** to create 155 one-bedroom apartments and support services to help stabilize formerly homeless adults, by having volunteers host housewarming parties at their homes.

"This gives us an opportunity to get the things that all of the people moving in are going to need," Sheilah P. Clay, NSO president and CEO, told **MLive Detroit**. "And it also allows the people who really want to be a part of this to help us and be impactful."

Clay said the parties can be anything from part of an already planned holiday celebration or birthday to an email sent to friends and family requesting donations.

"We want to be able to have things in those apartments for the individual moving in like a comforter, sheets, towels, pots and pans because they are coming with nothing," she said.

Each apartment has a gift registry at **Target**, which includes 100 items or so valued at a total of \$750. Items range from a \$65 microwave to a \$ .49 salt shaker.

Volunteer party hosts should register at **NSO's website**. The parties should take place before March 31, according to officials.

"We just want people to help us do this and really be part of the life transformation process we're going through for 155 people," Clay said. "I think it's really going to make people feel a part of this and really create a phenomenal experience for the people who are moving off the streets of Detroit."

In the past three years, NSO **raised \$40 million of the project's cost through** a combination of donations, equity financing, tax credits, loans and grants.

The "A Place to Call Home" campaign, which also is accepting \$5,000 donations for special recognitions inside the former Michigan Bell Building, is to help the organization raise the remaining \$10 million.

Once **renovations are complete**, the 255,000-square-foot building will also offer addiction treatment; mental-health counseling and case management services; life skills training; a library; computer, art and music rooms; a gym and fitness center; chapel; laundry; walk-out roof gardens; and a small sundry shop.

The renovation is the largest of its kind in Michigan, according to NSO, which anticipates the project to be complete in the fall of 2012.

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