

Agency focuses on overlooked group: Female veterans

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Lee Oviatt works outside of Robin's Home, which will provide housing and services to needy female veterans.

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A new agency in Butler County will be helping to provide needed shelter and services to an underserved portion of the community: female veterans.

Robin's Home, which will be completing phase 1 of its renovation plan and holding an open house in July, was created in partnership with Connect Inc., an affiliate of Southwestern Pennsylvania Human Services (SPHS), to help provide housing and services to women veterans and their children.

The home in Butler will house 14 single female veterans or six female veterans with children when it begins offering services, according to Mary Chitwood, project coordinator.

Chitwood, a Butler resident and U.S. Army veteran, founded the home in honor of a friend who served in the Army and was deployed in support of Operation Desert Storm.

Chitwood's friend passed away from complications from surgery on Jan. 27, 2017.

For the past two years, Chitwood has assisted more than 200 veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, as the coordinator for support services for Veterans Families at the Center for Community Resources in Butler and the Veterans Leadership Program of Western Pennsylvania.

Also, Chitwood facilitated a support group for female veterans at VA Butler Healthcare called Veteran Hope, which educates female veterans about resources available at the VA and in the community.

She said currently in Butler County, no agency provides supportive housing to homeless female veterans and their children — and Robin's Home is designed to fill that need.

“This is so important to me because while we have housing options for our male veterans, we have nowhere to house women veterans and their children,” Chitwood said.

A 2016 report by the Department of Veterans Affairs states that 14,134 veterans resided in Butler County, with nearly 1,000 of those being female veterans registered with VA Butler Healthcare.
