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Hope House may move into new facility

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If everything goes accordingly, the girls staying in Hope House will have a new home in 2010.

The house, which is administered by Child and Family Services, may be moving to the East Campus Youth and Family Center, formerly Alpena Community College's East Campus.

ACC transferred ownership of the building to Word of Life Baptist Church in August. The church only had to pay \$5,000 in legal and transferral fees.

The church has offered to donate space to Child and Family Services, which would then refurbish their portion of the building using money it has raised.

"We have the opportunity to make it look real nice and use it for a good purpose," CFS Executive Director Lyle Dorr said.

The property currently is zoned for office space, and will require a special use permit from the City of Alpena Planning Commission before the project can move forward.

If the planning commission gives its approval, the CFS Board of Directors would have to agree on the move. Dorr said the board has shown support, though some members have shown concern over the cost of the project.

The renovation is expected to cost \$1.2-\$1.4 million. Dorr said \$120,000 already has been raised, and grant money will be available for the project - especially because they will be using a donated building.

Hope House is a place troubled teenage girls, usually from outside of Alpena County, are sent - by a court order - to straighten out their lives.

If the project is approved and moves forward, there would be a separate eight-bed wing for abused and neglected girls.

Hope House would expand from 13 beds to 15 beds. Dorr said that will help keep 12-13 girls in the house at all times. In the past, two or more girls could leave in a short amount of time and the house would not be near capacity.

Being able to bring in girls without having to wait for another one to leave will be beneficial because it will give the new girls time to acclimate and get to know more mature Hope House members.

Dorr said he has been looking for a new facility for Hope House for 10-15 years, but every option fell through.

"This is probably the best opportunity we have seen, otherwise we would have done it 10 years ago," he said.

Word of Life Youth Pastor Wade Yocum said the church believed it was upholding the intent of the building, which the ACC board said was to help individuals meet their potential, when agreeing to donate space to CFS.

"We feel like this is a community building and that's one way that we can help people in need," Yocum said. "It's just a perfect fit."

Initially, Yocum had talked to Dorr about having CFS offices in the building, which Dorr said wasn't a priority.

"I woke up in the middle of the night thinking I don't need office space, but I need a group home," Dorr said.

Yocum said the area of the 41,000 square-foot building would basically be split equally between Word of Life and CFS. The church uses it's half mainly as a youth center.

He also said a garage sale is scheduled for Oct. 17-18 to help pay for a new roof on the building.

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