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A bridge to hope

Mission Solano moves ahead to help homeless

The world looked bleak to Fairfield's homeless population just a few years ago.

Solano County had just shut down its homeless day center, which provided services, some meals, and was a place to pick up mail and take a shower.

It was a lifeline for some very desperate people, and with its closure there was a true sense of abandonment.

At that time, Mission Solano stepped up to the plate to provide dignity and hope for those who had none. The faith-based group, which already offered meals and shelter to the homeless through local churches, increased its commitment and developed a plan.

That plan became reality this week, when it broke ground on a \$9 million project. It was a blustery day when officials and dignitaries gathered to turn the first shovel of dirt at the corner of Beck Avenue and Cordelia Road in Fairfield.

It was the kind of weather that makes you appreciate warm clothes and shelter. It was the kind of weather that the homeless endure every winter, hunkered down in their tents, cars or under overpasses.

It was the kind of weather that makes you realize just how important Mission Solano's project really is. It is going to provide shelter, food, services and, ultimately, hope to the homeless.

More than 100 women and children will be served in the first phase of the project, which is installation of a "Bridge to Life Center." Not only will it provide beds and shelter, but it will emphasize education and teach success strategies.

Services will include basic education, job training, counseling, money management skills and health services.

Future phases will include transitional housing for up to 48 homeless families, men's housing units, and a full education and training center.

So far Mission Solano has raised \$4.7 million - about half of what will be needed.

Much of it came from the city of Fairfield and HomeAid, the charity arm of the building industry. The Fairfield-Suisun Christian Center plans a benefit at 6 p.m. Dec. 17 at its Suisun City location, and more fundraising efforts are on the horizon.

It is our hope that not only Fairfield, but other Solano County communities, businesses and individuals embrace the concept of Mission Solano, and offer what they can to make it a reality.