

GAZETTE GRANT WILL BENEFIT PEOPLE FACING AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

How our grant is helping homeless shelter



■ Helping hand – Gazette reporter Lauren Oldershaw presents the cheque to Pernille Petersen on behalf of the Gazette

SNF9X

A ROLLING programme of refurbishment at Colchester's Homeless Shelter has been given a massive boost, thanks to your Gazette.

The shelter has been chosen to receive £7,404 from the Gannett Foundation, set up by the Gazette's owner Gannett.

The foundation invites charities to apply for a share of thousands of pounds to help improve the lives of people across the county.

And the money has come at the right time for the emergency night shelter, in the town's Alexandra Road.

It is in the middle of a long-term, large-scale refurbishment project which involves overhauling all the 11 bedrooms and other areas which have not been revamped since it opened more than 20 years ago.

Two of the bedrooms have already been completed, as well as its two kitchens, thanks to a £50,000 fundraising drive launched a couple of years ago.

But the charity, which receives housing benefit like other private landlords, but does not get any grants or support for the work it does to help

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rehousing people, is now set to install a new laundry room with the Gannett Foundation money.

Work will begin straight away to find a contractor to carry out the work, as the cash will be added to a £5,000 donation received from the Chelmsford-based Fowler Smith and Jones Charitable Trust earlier this year. Shelter co-ordinator

“We have not been able to start work before we got the full amount”

Pernille Petersen said: “We have not been able to start work before we got the full amount we would need, because it is something that needs to be done all at once.

“We are going to paint, re-do the floor and then install the new equipment.”

The room has not been updated since the shelter, which opens its doors every night at 7.15pm, opened. Guests

must leave every day by 9am, except on a Sunday, when they have until 9.30am, and cannot return again until that evening.

The maximum stay is 28 days. During this time, the team of volunteers and full-time staff try to find permanent homes for those at the shelter.

Like so many charities, the homeless shelter relies on volunteers who carry out a range of roles, including helping to prepare evening meals.

Pernille added: “We get an awful lot of support and we are so grateful.

“The family of Lauren Evans, who was killed in a car accident in 2006, have raised £10,000 since her death. We are also now one of the mayor's charities and have been given £3,000 by the Rotary Club.”

Gazette editor Martin McNeill said: “We are delighted to be able to help such a worthy cause.

“The shelter has given hope to thousands of people over the past 20 years and hopefully this grant will help make life a little more comfortable for people facing an uncertain future.”