

# TENNESSEAN COM

## Room In The Inn opens permanent housing for homeless

**Apartments offer new beginning to residents; new center also offers job, health, education services**

By Nicole Young • THE TENNESSEAN • August 27, 2010

After five years of living in the dark alleys of Nashville, John "Cowboy" Brazelton soaked up the sunlight pouring through the window of his new apartment.

"If someone told me two years ago that I'd be standing right here, right now in my own apartment again, I would've asked them how hard they hit the wall with their head," Brazelton said.

The 59-year-old man is one of the first homeless residents accepted into permanent housing at the Room In The Inn's Comprehensive Center, a \$13 million expansion that includes 38 apartments.

Residents sign a six-month lease and pay rent on a sliding scale based on income. The minimum is \$200 per month and the maximum is \$550 per month. All of the 500-square-foot apartments come fully furnished.

"We want their first night in their new apartment to be kind of an exhale, you know," said Rachel Hester, executive director of the Room In The Inn on Eighth Avenue South. "We want them to relax, not to have them think about 'Do I have a table?'"

### Support services offered

Nineteen men are on the waiting list for permanent housing. To be eligible, they had to submit an application and have a job, Social Security or military benefits.

The center's expansion also includes a 13-classroom learning center; expanded medical respite care for individuals recovering from illness or injury; midday meal services to 200 to 300 people daily; and personal hygiene facilities, including showers and laundry services.

"We expect to have over 100 people here around the clock in transitional and permanent housing," Hester said.

"About 200 to 300 people will stay with the 173 congregations we work with and we will still have to turn people away. We still need more space."

There also is an on-site Department of Human Services office, education and job readiness programs, short-term storage and secure storage for important documents and prescriptions, and on-site library/Internet access.

### Strobel sees more need

Charles Strobel, founding director of Room In The Inn, said he'd like to see the organization offer more housing.

"If we can do this," he said, gesturing to the facility, "I'd like to think we can find the energy and spirit to do more housing as we go forward, but we don't have any immediate plans right now."

Strobel founded Room In The Inn while he was a priest at Holy Name Church in East Nashville. On a winter night in 1985, he noticed a group of people camping in the church parking lot. "I did what anyone would do; I invited them in," he said.

Brazelton credits the or-organization with saving his

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life. The former soldier said alcohol cost him his job, home and marriage before he finally decided to get help in August 2008. He had two weeks of treatment at a Murfreesboro veterans hospital before entering Room In The Inn's transitional program. Today, he has two jobs — in the Bridgestone Arena kitchens and Nashville Sounds concessions — and he's trying to reconnect with his son, 33, and daughter, 36. He also completed his first two courses at National College in Nashville. He hopes to major in computer applied technology.

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John "Cowboy" Brazelton moves into his new Room In The Inn apartment with all his possessions. (JOHN PARTIPILO / THE TENNESSEAN)



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Room In The Inn's old and new buildings are right across from each other on Eighth Avenue South. The new Comprehensive Center includes 38 furnished apartment that will be leased to homeless residents. (JOHN PARTIPILO / THE TENNESSEAN)

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Homeless men can use telephones at Room In The Inn's new center. (JOHN PARTIPILO / THE TENNESSEAN)

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