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Synergy Services set to show off new \$7 million homeless youth campus

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Robin Winner couldn't have been happier Wednesday standing amid the buckets of plaster, sheets of drywall and piles of sawdust.

For Winner, executive director of Synergy Services, these were signs that the nonprofit she leads would be able to help more teenagers.

"We are building for the future," she said.

Today, however, Winner will — for the first time — show off to donors Synergy Services' new \$7 million homeless youth campus near Interstate 35 and Parvin Road in Kansas City, North.

The agency began in 1970 as Synergy House, the only shelter for runaway and homeless youth in western Missouri.

The new campus, set to open later this year, will include an 8,000-square-foot shelter for 24 youths — double the number the agency can handle now — and a 24,000-square-foot youth resource center.

The project's importance hasn't been lost on those it helps, as illustrated by a recent conversation Winner had with a teen who asked Winner how such a campus could be built. Winner told her about donors, such as the Hall Family Foundation, which provided the lead gift of almost \$1 million.

"The girl said, 'Why would Hallmark Cards care about kids like us?' " recalled Winner, who explained that the Halls and other donors were confident the youths they helped would make a difference someday.

Everything in the resource center will be free and designed so teens remain connected through useful programs and therapies.

There will be stuff teens love — an indoor basketball court, a climbing wall — and stuff they need, such as a health clinic.

There will be a creative arts program — primarily backed by the Rita and Irwin Blitt Family Foundation — developed with Young Audiences of Kansas City.

Winner is putting the welcome mat out to all agencies that help homeless teens.

"This is a resource for everybody," Winner said. "The worst possible thing is if the kids didn't use it consistently. We want to be inundated with kids."