

South Memphis apartment rehab provides new start for homeless

By [Bill Dries](#)

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The renovation of the Boyette Memorial Apartments at 1547 Kansas St. was unveiled Monday, Dec. 16, 2019. (Patrick Lantrip/Daily Memphian)

The brick apartment building at 1547 Kansas St. and West Waldorf Avenue in South Memphis will probably always be considered a modest place to live.

But the renovation unveiled Monday, Dec. 16, of the circa 1952 building, known as Boyette Memorial Apartments, is a big improvement from the decaying and boarded-up interiors that neighbors remembered as they inspected the rehab work. The nonprofit Case Management Inc. performed the renovation.

New stoves and refrigerators donated by Home Depot for the apartments, along with new floors, windows and other basics, are funded by a \$225,251 grant from the Tennessee Housing Development Agency for the transitional housing.

A group of 30 people, including the first family to move in, crowded into the small front room before the ribbon was cut Monday on the front porch during a steady rain.

“The people that are going to get the opportunity to live here have been homeless for years,” said Florence Hervery, CMI Healthcare Services chief executive. “The big thing about servicing individuals with mental illness is sometimes they burn bridges, they have bad credit, they can’t qualify for apartments. They burn bridges even in their families. ... But here, we’re targeting that population.”

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CMI has owned the property for about 20 years. It was donated to CMI by Universal Life Insurance Co., which bought it at auction in the late 1990s for \$65,744 after a previous owner defaulted on a loan, according to property records.

“We tried to fix it up a little bit, but we just didn’t have the resources to do the things that needed to be done,” Hervery said.

The THDA grant from the Tennessee Housing Trust Fund was a critical point. CMI had applied three times for the grant with the third time being the charm.

“Everyone should experience a sense of home and community where they live,” THDA executive director Ralph Perrey said in a written statement.

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With the funding, the apartments were rewired, the roof and pipes were replaced, a sprinkler system was added along with central air and heat and wheelchair ramps.

The CMI clients moving into the apartments also receive counseling and similar services.

“We provide face-to-face services Most are already clients already receiving services,” Hervery said. “We’ll provide whatever support is needed for them to remain stable and independent in the community. That’s what we want.”

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