

The Rotary House: Going Green in L.A.

GREEN features of Rotary House include:

- Photovoltaic solar panels power the entire facility, become a source of DWP credits, and offset 24,000 tons of carbon per year
- Highly insulated, reflective roof uses 40 percent less energy for cooling the building
- High-output HVAC system
- High energy lighting fixtures and compact fluorescent bulbs
- ‘Low-e’ windows and skylights control heat and add light
- Zero VOC paint and coatings are less harmful to human health, and reduce landfill, ground-water and ozone depleting contaminants
- Water-conserving toilets reduce water use by 400,000 gallons per year
- Restored hardscape and drought-tolerant landscaping will reduce water consumption

Pre-Renovation Capacity/Services

- 90 beds
- 500 served annually
- Emergency and transitional housing
- Permanent housing placement
- Services referrals

Post-Renovation Capacity/Services

- 150 beds
- 1800 served annually
- Emergency and transitional housing
- Permanent housing placement
- Services referrals
- Job training
 - Computer skills training
 - Culinary arts skills training
- Benefits advocacy and medical referrals
- Assessments and individual life plans
- New basketball court and outdoor recreation areas
- Special services for veterans
 - Incarcerated veterans program
 - VA and SSI benefits advocacy
 - Transportation
 - Medical referrals
 - On-site nursing services

According to GreenNonProfits.org, “as people and corporations around the world become more ‘green’ they in turn expect the nonprofits they support to also take proactive steps to protect the environment. The benefits are twofold: the global environment improves as a result of the nonprofit sector taking action; and nonprofits become part of environmental solutions and successfully respond to funder and donor demands.”

Volunteers of America of Greater Los Angeles has embraced “green thinking” with its latest project: a major renovation of its landmark 20,000-square-foot homeless service center in downtown Los Angeles. The goal is to not only be environmentally responsible in the construction of this facility, but to also provide an enhanced continuum of services within a place of shelter, dignity and hope for homeless individuals on Skid Row.

“It is an integral part of our philosophy to believe in the inherent good nature of people and their potential to return to independence and self-sufficiency,” said Volunteers of America of Greater Los Angeles CEO Bob Pratt. “The concern for our planet’s welfare is part and parcel of that philosophy. We believe that creating this type of environment for our homeless people demonstrates we are investing in the future.”

Volunteers of America is utilizing renewable energy and maximizing new energy efficient technologies to improve human and environmental health wherever possible. “Green building” practices will have an immediate and measurable impact. The scope of the project also includes an exterior facelift, enhanced reception area for improved access and assessment; new computer and job resource lab; the expansion of living areas; a major kitchen upgrade; additional office workspaces; and parking lot resurfacing.

Going “green” now will pay off later, and for nonprofits such as Volunteers of America, this can make all the difference in continuing to provide services for those in need for years to come. “These



efforts will substantially reduce our carbon footprint,” said Patti Louie, chief financial officer. “With this investment, utility expenses drop immediately and will offset rising expenses in other areas, allowing long-term viability of this vital downtown resource.”

The project is supported by a pledge from the Los Angeles Rotary Club in honor of its 100th year anniversary. Members of the Rotary pledged to raise \$500,000 over the next three years to support the facility’s renovation.

“Volunteers of America of Greater Los Angeles and the Rotary Club of Los Angeles have partnered on various projects for more than 70 years,” said David Bland, LA5 Rotary president. “Given today’s economic conditions, I can’t think of a more appropriate project. Extending a hand to homeless people, many who are Veterans, is the crowning jewel to help us celebrate our centennial.”

In recognition of this unprecedented support from the Rotary Club, the facility will be renamed “Rotary House.” However, the Rotary participation goes much further than a generous gift. It is a permanent partnership between the Rotary Club and Volunteers of America to respond to the growing population of homeless veterans in downtown Los Angeles, exemplifying what Rotary members do best: assist veterans in a myriad of ways to become job-ready and utilize their (the Rotary’s) widespread manufacturing and service industry contacts to help them find employment.