

Local agencies to host meal for Winslow residents

GREENFIELD — In an effort to build a tighter, more supportive and friendlier community among the 55 residents of the Winslow Apartments on Main and Wells streets, three local social service agencies will host a community meal there for the residents on Thursday.

Nicole Fahey of Greenfield Housing Associates, owner of the building, said the meal, which GHA, Franklin County Sheriff's Office and Franklin County Resource Network hope is the first of many, will be provided by Green Fields Market and Just Roots farm.

Fahey said the idea came from the Transitions-from-Jail-to-Community Program Committee, of which she is a member.

Early this year, GHA worked with

the sheriff to provide four Winslow apartments to inmates about to be released from the local jail after completing their sentence or being put on probation.

The idea is to give those non-violent and non-sex offender inmates who have nowhere else to go a low-income place to live while they transition back into the community after up to 2½ years in jail.

Over the next few years, GHA would like to see the majority of the Winslow's 55 rooms rented to released inmates.

The local probation and sheriff's offices have been providing oversight of

the program and have people working in the Winslow on and off throughout each day to help with the transition.

"Hosting the community meals will help all Winslow residents connect with each other in a venue supporting the development of a healthy environment, while it invites their involvement in both the Winslow community and community-at-large," said Fahey.

She said the goal is to hold a community meal on the third Thursday of each month. The meal will be held in the building's Community Room.

The agencies involved already have commitments from Montague

Catholic Social Ministries, United Way of Franklin County, Community Action and Greenfield Housing Authority to help.

"This will also provide residents with face-to-face access to local resources and organizations," said Fahey. "This is going to be a true community partnership from start to finish."

Jessica Van Steensburg, director of management and administration at Just Roots, said the farm is delighted to support the newly launched Winslow House Community Meal through the donation of produce grown on the Greenfield Community Farm.

"Making whole, healthy, local food available for our community members is right on mission," said Van Steensburg.

She said Nate Rogers, who is a current resident of the Winslow, works at the farm.

Suzette Snow-Cobb said Green Fields Market, which is part of Franklin Community Co-op, is always seeking ways to build community engagement and improve access to healthy food for all members of the community.

"Being neighbors to our Green Fields Market store, the Winslow meal is an endeavor to do just that," she said. "We're happy to provide a cook to coordinate the meal and food for it."

The meal, for Winslow residents only this time, will be held at the Winslow on Thursday from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Winslow residents will have the opportunity to meet their neighbors, learn about local resources and share a great meal, according to organizers. Future Winslow dinners may be open to the public, as are other community meals routinely held elsewhere in the county on other days of the week.