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Students at Center for Small Towns working to solve senior housing problem in Milan

Summary:

(December 15, 2003)-As people get older and unable to live independently in their homes, many have to move away from family, friends, their church, and their community. Small towns are facing a growing problem when there is no place for area seniors, due to their changing needs, to live in their community. Over the past year a number of residents from the City of Milan had to leave town to find appropriate housing. Two students from the University of Minnesota, Morris -- senior Jeff Janca from Chicago, Ill., and freshman Amanda Jacobson from Canby -- have been working with the City of Milan to solve this problem.

Janca and Jacobson work with Ben Winchester, the coordinator of data analysis and research at the Center for Small Towns at UMM, that is conducting research with the city. The purpose is to develop, administer and analyze a survey of area seniors to see who would be interested in living in the facility, and also to determine what types of services will be available. The survey will be distributed in the middle of January. This facility will be housed in the vacant telecommunication building on Main Street. The plan is to include a number of sleeping rooms, a community dining setting, and scheduled recreational activities. Details of the facility, such as services and activities, are yet to be determined.

Janca and Jacobson began this project by researching other small towns to learn what has worked and what has not. They examined the different types of care facilities, the various regulations, and how other communities have implemented these facilities. They were able to look at different models used in other communities in west central Minnesota such as Sunburg, Glenwood and Starbuck. This research will help Milan and other small towns gain access to information needed to implement senior care facilities in their community.

The Center for Small Towns (CST) is a community outreach program housed at the University of Minnesota, Morris and serves as a point-of-entry to the resources of the University of Minnesota. Small towns, local units of government, K-12 schools, non-profit organizations, and other University units are able to utilize the Center's resources as they work on rural issues or make contributions to rural society. CST's mission is to focus the University's attention and marshal its resources toward assisting Minnesota's small towns with locally identified issues by creating applied learning opportunities for faculty and students. This project is a collaborative effort between the Center for Small Towns, the City of Milan, and the Community Assistantship Program at the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs located at the University of Minnesota.

Access more information about the Center for Small Towns at www.centerforsmalltowns.org, or call 320-589-6451.

(Contributed by Jessica Beyer '02, community program assistant at the Center for Small Towns)

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