

Residents concerned about group home

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A group of about 100 residents gathered at a neighborhood meeting Thursday in East Rochester to learn more about a potential group home for youth opening in a village neighborhood.

Villa of Hope youth and family services offers varied levels of programs for youth who have been through the foster care system and who have experienced trauma, such as domestic violence or neglect.

The nonprofit has a purchase offer in for a former convent on West Filbert Street to house eight male and female children ages 16 to 21 as part of a group home, which will operate as a home for the individuals with a curfew, 24-hour staffing and extra resources, such as social workers and counselors.

Some East Rochester residents voiced concerns about the location of the home, which is situated near an elementary school, and the stability of the home's residents. "Nobody comes into this work wanting to go through traumatic experiences," said Christina Gullo, Villa of Hope's president and CEO. "But the great news is that at Villa of Hope, we're really able to work with them and they're able to become these wonderful young adults who have completely transformed their lives."

The Villa operates group homes in Spencerport, Greece and Williamson, Wayne County, all of which have small numbers of residents.

Having potentially troublesome children in the community is an added burden to law enforcement, some residents argued.

"We already have a very challenged youth," said East Rochester resident Misty Boldt. "The police department and the town work very, very hard to try to keep our town safe and to keep our kids safe." Villa employees displayed data showing a 100 percent high school graduation rate for residents of operating group homes over the past two years, and showed statistics on recorded negative incidents, including fights and missing person reports.

The organization is professional and follows through on its promises, said resident Rocco Platino, who served on the Villa's board in the past.

"All the Villa is doing is providing a structure and people who care about (the residents,)" he said.

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