

Harley students build tiny shelter for Peace Village

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Rochester Democrat and Chronicle USA TODAY NETWORK

Miles and Morgan Brody, two middle schoolers at the Harley School, regularly volunteer with their father, Harlan, at the Peace Village.

The Peace Village is an officially recognized encampment for unhoused people in the city of Rochester. One day, the boys saw shelters being built and installed at the village, and they had a bright idea.

“They said, ‘Wait a minute, we can do that too. We have a shop at Harley, we have people at Harley, we can build a shelter,’ ” said Kima Enerson.

Enerson is the maker educator at Harley, a capacity in which she runs the Maker Space and workshop, which includes a wood shop, at the school. Harlan reached out to Enerson with the idea, and she jumped on it — even though she had no prior experience building a structure from scratch, “I said, ‘Yes, I don’t know how I’m going to do it, but I have a few upper school classes and some middle school community times. Let’s see what we can do,’ ” she said.

Following that initial call, Enerson dedicated about half of her upper school class, along with middle schoolers who work during their community time — in total 11 students work on the project — to completing the tiny shelter.

Because the structure has no plumbing or heating, the Peace Village board calls them “tiny shelters,” not “tiny homes” or “tiny houses.”

Enerson said she believes the structures help enhance the quality of life for people in Peace Village. The students have been mindful about what to include in the structure, taking a holistic consideration of what people living in it might need or want.

In this way, the students are not only building a structure that Enerson designs and plans with little input of their own, but also they are integral

building into the structure to ensure its sustainability and what they need to do to ensure that the structure is helping people and not harming them.

Though the students only have a limited window to work on the building — 45 minutes every day — they’ve already made quite a bit of progress on the shelter.

Enerson said that they plan to have installed the completed structure by the end of the trimester.

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Harley School students Alex Sassaman of Pittsford Vivian Rothberg of Pittsford and Haley Corteville of Penfield wait for fellow student Megan Curwin of Brighton who was bringing over a battery for the drill. The four were working on a piece of the roof, April 22, for a tiny house for the homeless at Peace Village in Rochester. PHOTOS

parts to the entirety of the structure from conception to execution. “With the students, its been great to see how willing they are to really collaborate in the sort of building aspect of it and not only be the physical labor, but sort of be the thought behind it,” Enerson said. “In the class that they take, we really work hard in trying to understand all different aspects of design and the people who are going to use (the) design, so we’ve taken some time in our class to learn about the cycle of homelessness and why a shelter like this would be beneficial.”

She said that students have quickly and easily taken to the collaborative nature of building the shelter and that they are self-motivated in doing so.

“I always feel so great when I stand back and I have nothing to do in a process because that feels like I am giving them what they need to succeed,” she said. “They’re already prompting each other for more ideas and, ‘What are the other things we can think about?’ It’s always great to see students engaged in that way.”

Enerson said the students have considered not only the structure itself, but also what features the structure should include, what features they are

BY TINA MACINTYRE-YEE/ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE



Harley School students work on creating a tiny shelter for the homeless at Peace Village in Rochester on April 22. Four of the walls of the home are up. Harley has almost enough donated funds to create a second home.

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