

The Rev. Harry Wallar, who has long sought help and comfort for the area's poor and homeless, announced Wednesday a new project to care for homeless veterans of Omaha and Council Bluffs.

"For us, there's nothing worse than for veterans who served this country to be homeless," he said.

Statistics show there are hundreds of homeless vets in the Omaha/Council Bluffs area and many need more than just a place to sleep overnight - specialized care to get them back on their feet, Wallar and other human service officials said.

To that end, Wallar's ministry, the Christian Worship Center, in partnership with other agencies, has just received a \$1.8 million federal grant to help build a 26-unit transitional housing complex at 16th and Nicholas streets in Omaha. It will serve veterans from Council Bluffs, as well as in Omaha, officials said.

Those who will live in that complex will abide by the same principles at Wallar's other transitional units at his New Visions project on North 15th Street in Council Bluffs. The vets can stay at the new complex no more than 24 months as they receive job and life skills training.

"Then, we'll follow them for six months to ensure they get stability in the community," Wallar said.

Since many vets have particular needs like post-combat traumatic stress that others don't have, specialized programs will be created to help them, he added. The apartments at the Omaha complex will be around 410 square feet, the same size at the New Visions complex, and will feature a living room, bedroom, bath and small kitchen.

Construction is set to begin in the second quarter of next year and be finished in about a year.

The grant came from the Veterans Administration with help from the office of Nebraska Congressman Lee Terry.

"This money will go a long way in reducing the number of veterans without a home and get them back on their feet to productive members of society," Terry said through his office.

