

Apartments for Omaha's homeless vets

Omaha World Herald

March 12, 2012

Tommy Davis can't forget the first one.

The 57-year-old Marine veteran says he has successfully pushed the rest out of his mind. He doesn't remember the second man he felled with his M-14 in Vietnam, or the third, or the 13th.

Davis rests his elbows on a long table inside a Council Bluffs homeless shelter. He unclenches his fists, opens his hands and stares down at his palms.

Since he left Vietnam four decades ago, he has battled a meth addiction and has had trouble holding down a steady job. He survived a ruptured spleen, then a stroke.

The previous night he slept on a bunk at this shelter, Mohm's Place. He has been homeless, and sleeping here, for three years.

"I can still see his face when I shot him," Davis says. He looks up. "Like this," he says and bulges his eyes out and opens his mouth wide. "I'll always remember that. After that, it got easier."

A new Omaha-area program is trying to make it easier for veterans like Davis who struggle to keep a roof over their heads after returning from military service.

Today, Omaha city leaders and Rep. Lee Terry will cut the ribbon on a 26-bed apartment-style housing complex meant to offer veterans a temporary home and a range of services as they try to right their lives. The facility is at 1425 N. 18th St., north of the Siena-Francis House shelter.

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