

'He's given me a place to stay'

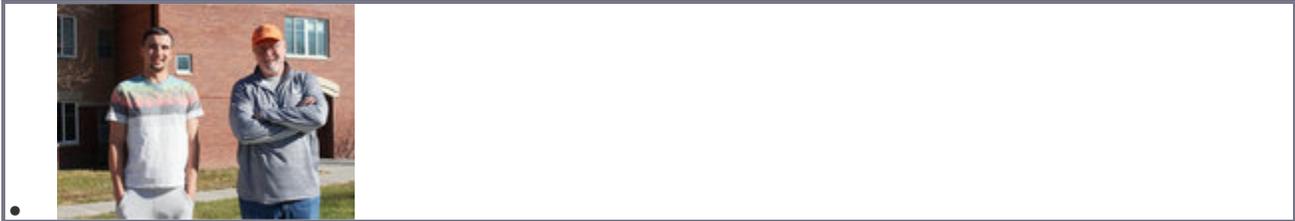
First Angels Share youth moves onto former Dana College campus



Gabriel Schueth, left, stands with Angels Share founder and president Ed Shada on the former Dana College campus. Schueth is the first tenant and participant of the Angels Share program. He moved into his apartment Tuesday after working in Blair for about a month.

LEEANNA ELLIS

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By Leeanna Ellis - editor@enterprisepub.com

After years in foster care and a bout with homelessness, Gabriel Schueth has a place to call his own.

The 21-year-old is the first tenant for a program developed by Angels Share, a nonprofit aimed at helping youth aging out of foster care. Schueth signed his contract with Ed Shada, founder and president, and moved into his new apartment Tuesday on the former Dana College campus.

“Alright, buddy. It's your place,” Shada told him after the paper was signed.

Schueth was proud to show off his apartment, which he decorated with a Denver Broncos flag above his bed. But he was still in disbelief that the place was his.

“It hasn't hit me (yet),” he said.

It's been a tough road for Schueth to get to this point. He was just 2 days old when he was placed in the foster care system. At age 14, he was adopted. But three years later, he was back in the system.

“My adopted mom terminated her rights,” he said.

After graduating from Omaha Central, Schueth attended Pine Ridge Job Corps in Chadron, where he earned certifications in facilities maintenance.

“Then I moved on with life,” he said. “Now I'm here.”

But for three months prior to moving onto the Angels Share campus, Schueth was homeless. He was living in hotels, one of which had no hot water.

“I just couldn't have him living without hot water,” Shada said.

While Angels Share was awaiting its certificate of occupancy for the suite-style apartments, Shada found a hotel room for Schueth in Blair.

For the last month, Schueth has been working as a maintenance technician for Lund, a company that manages several apartments complexes in Blair. He loves the work, which includes changing air filters, plumbing, dry wall and electrical.

“I work with my hands a lot,” he said. “If my hands aren't dirty by the end of the day, I don't consider that I worked.”

More youth are expected to move onto the campus soon. Angels Share has received four more applications, two of which have been approved. There is room for 24 youth.

Angels Share has been working with around 20 service providers to identify youth who are interested in learning a trade or receiving on the job training, Shada said. The youth would come from Omaha and other areas across the state and work with area businesses interested in participating.

As part of their contract, the youth are expected to pay rent and utilities for their apartment. Those who have lived in foster care, like Schueth, can apply for HUD youth vouchers, which will help reduce their costs.

Businesses that employ the youth could benefit through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which would reimburse companies the wages for each participant hired. Participants must work full time — a minimum of 35 hours — and receive at least \$12 an hour.

Those youth who move into the apartments will have very few belongings and will be in need of a variety of items, including mattresses, sheets, blankets, pillows, towels, kitchen utensils, pots and pans and even furniture.

After nearly three years of planning and waiting, Shada was happy to see Schueth move on campus and the program come to fruition.

“It's the culmination of a lot of hard work,” he said. “It's not just me.”

Shada credited the partnerships with the service providers and various individuals and organizations, including Bob Coffey, Christ Lutheran Church and the Dana College Foundation.

Shada was also proud of Schueth, who he expects will serve as a mentor to other youth as they move in.

Schueth was grateful for the support and a place to call home.

“It's all support. I've got a great support system,” he said. “I could list off a few people, but Ed is one of the biggest support people right now. He's given me a place to stay.”