Winsted soup kitchen missing

By JUNE PETERSON
Register Citizen Staff

WINSTED — The drive to create a soup kitchen in Winsted was dealt a blow this week when organizers learned block grant funds are not available for the project.

"Financially, that is a setback," Selectman Nancy P. Habbal, president of the group that is trying to start the kitchen, said last night.

Habbal met earlier this week with Laurence Wagner of L. Wagner & Associates, the consulting firm that assists the town with block grant applications.

Wagner told her that because the block grant funding only recently became active again, not enough money exists in the revolving account to fund the kitchen. Under the federal Small Cities Block Grant Program, which helps fund housing for people with low-to-moderate incomes, homeowners pay the loans back into a revolving account, and the money is then loaned out again. Because the program has been dormant for so long, the revolving account has not been replenished, Habbal said.

"There is not money in the account that we could access," Habbal said. Habbal had hoped to receive between $8,000 and $10,000 in block grant funds to launch the project.

Town Manager Wayne W. Dove has promised to try and look for other grant money to assist with the project, Habbal said.

However, Habbal and the committee are determined to move forward with plans to have a kitchen open by Oct. 1, Habbal said. "On October 1st we will open . . . we may have to operate out of my kitchen," Habbal said.

main ingredient — money

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Some fund-raisers are planned for September, and donations have been trickling in, she said.

The Valley Thrift Shop of New Hartford contributed $1,000, and the group has received two private donations totaling about $200, Habbal said. On Monday, the Board of Selectmen took $450 out of its contingency fund to donate to the soup kitchen.

Although plans have not been finalized, Habbal wants to find a site for the kitchen by Sept. 1, which would allow a month to prepare to open. The group is looking for a downtown location. The Winsted merchants association recently endorsed the plan.

Community lawyer Charlene LaVoie is helping the project to obtain tax-exempt status.

Habbal has estimated that it may take about $18,000 to run the soup kitchen for six months. The group expects to serve about 35 lunches a day. Winsted Memorial Hospital will provide the box lunches for a fee, Habbal said.

Anyone wishing to donate to the soup kitchen may do so by writing to The Open Door; P.O. Box 57; Winsted 06098.