Following several years of fund raising and rehabilitation work, the renovation of the Villa East Apartments in Haxtun is finally complete.

To mark this significant improvement, all who were directly or indirectly involved in making it happen—over 40 county individuals, local and neighboring businesses—were invited to join in a group picture on Sunday, Dec. 14.

Unfortunately, the picture had to be canceled due to inclement weather. Acknowledgement of those people can be found in an ad on page 2 of this week's Enterprise.

The Villa East apartments have a rich and productive 30-year history.

In March of 1977, the Haxtun Housing Authority board members purchased three lots in the original Town of Haxtun. This action was taken for the purpose of building affordable housing for low-income elderly and handicapped persons.

Ten multi-family units were completed on Feb. 28, 1978, and opened to the public. Since then, the Villa East units have been fully occupied and currently have a waiting list.

As in human history, so in the history of institutions and buildings: few create their tales alone. This is true of Villa East's 30-year story.

The Federal Home Loan Bank of Topeka (FHLB), through its Rural Technical Assistance Program (RTAP), directed and funded a Housing Profile and Needs Assessment of Phillips County, completed in May 2004. The RTAP manager and the Phillips County Economic Development housing committee regarded the rehabilitation of Villa East as a high priority.

Although there has been consistent maintenance from the time of original construction, major exterior and interior repairs were needed.

This priority was presented to the Haxtun Housing Authority Board Commissioners. After deliberation, the board agreed to apply for a grant from FHLB of Topeka, and directed the executive director to make an application for the Villa East rehab project. Melissa Miller Atwood, Community Programs Specialist of FHLB, assisted local grant writers Julie Angleton and Dorothy Ortner, and was the project's spirit and motivator.

In order to receive a grant, local funding and in-kind services were a prerequisite—matching not in amount, but in the intention of support and good will. First Pioneer National Bank provided the bridge loan throughout the interim of reimbursement by the FHLB of Topeka. The Heginbotham Trust committed $5,000.

Housing Authority employees, as well as the Senior Service Coordinator, pledged volunteer services to the residents or service toward the completion of the rehab project. Haxtun Housing Authority board members oversaw the finances and the progressing rehab work.

The entire board has a calendar of compliance reporting dates and will be finally responsible for implementation.

The story moved towards "happily ever after" when FHLB of Topeka informed the Haxtun Housing Authority and First Pioneer National Bank that a grant of $88,892 had been awarded by the board of directors on Dec. 16, 2005. The FHLB board of directors made 22 such awards during the second round of the 2005 granting period, of which eight were in the state of Colorado.

Most of the rehab work was done in the interior of the apartments. New windows, appliances and safer showers were installed. The carpets and floors were updated as well. On the exterior, the building has new roof tiles, and concrete walking spaces have replaced overgrown bushes.

The executive director of the Haxtun Housing Authority can give a contented and well-deserved sigh of relief: the renovation of Villa East Apartments is now complete.