By JESSICA CRAWFORD

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Cherry wood sleigh bed at Scantlin's Furniture – $789; decorative queen-size sheet set at JC Penney's – $35; plug-in glow light at Standard Supply – $4; falling asleep knowing that you will be alerted in the event of a fire or dangerous carbon monoxide levels – priceless.

Nearly a year ago, housing and community development director Karen LaFreniere began a partnership with the Liberal Fire Department to form the Safe at Home program. The program provides free smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors to anyone within the city limits of Liberal in need of them.

"We started in January of 2008," LaFreniere said. "I worked for the fire department years ago, and I knew they gave away smoke detectors.

I thought we could expand that for carbon monoxide, too, and just make it a bigger program than what we had before.

"The fire department had always done it," she explained. "We are doing it as a partnership, so it's just kind of our departments working together on it."

The program, LaFreniere said, is funded by the 1-cent sales tax. She added that much of what her department handles is funded by the 1- cent sales tax.

In the event that a homeowner or renter feels they need a smoke alarm or carbon monoxide detector, all they need to do is go down to LaFreniere's office after the first of the year and fill out an application.

"We have an application and they just fill it out," she said. "When we have them in stock, they can just come in, fill out the application. There is a waiver on the back that states if it doesn't work properly, then that's not the city's liability because we don't manufacture them.

"There is just that form," she added. "We keep the application on file to know how many we distribute."

LaFreniere added that anyone interested in having both detectors placed on hold until they are received after the first of the year can just call her office. She will be keeping a running list of names and alert everyone interested when the detectors come in.

"We will be taking bids for them and after we get bids we will have to order them, so it will probably be around the first of the year,"

she said. "We are going to get 200 of each. They go pretty quick when we first get them in. We will just take names and put them down on a list for the detectors and call them when they come in."

LaFreniere is not sure as of yet what manufacturers will be supplying the dectors. However, she said, she has certain specifications that must be met.

The specifications that I have is that the smoke alarm has a 10-year lithium battery, that way they don't have to change them all the time," she said. "The carbon monoxide detector will be a plug-in with a battery back up."

According to LaFreniere, the detectors are very easy to install. In fact, the fire department is

always willing to install detectors for those who are elderly.

“The fire department is really good about if someone is elderly, they will install it for them,” she said. “And the carbon monoxide detectors just plug in, they are very simple, and they have a battery backup.”

Skeety Poulton, deputy chief of operations for the fire department said that the peace of mind the detectors provide are well worth the time of filling out the application to obtain them.

“They are an early detection device,” Poulton explained. “Number one, they alert people so they can get out before things get really bad.

They save lives, they definitely save lives.

“It is a great program, and I encourage everyone in the city that needs a smoke detector or carbon monoxide detector to take full advantage of this,” he added. “This is peace of mind, knowing when you go to sleep at night, you’re going to have something that will wake you up.”

By forming a partnership with the housing and community development department, fire chief Kelly Kirk said the the process of providing detectors to the public has become much more effective.

“For many years, we relied on donations and grants to purchase smoke detectors for the program,” Kirk said. “With Karen and the housing department’s ‘Safe at Home’ program, they are able to provide both smoke and CO detectors and we help assist as a distribution point and can help citizens with technical questions or even installation and location of the detectors.

“The first year of the program was extremely successful, and we will continue it again this year with twice as many smoke and CO detectors,” he added. “The coordination between the two departments is a very natural and efficient combination.”