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## Light House Shelter Begins a New Era

The new homeless prevention support center will serve people in Annapolis and nearby areas

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Five years in the making ... that's how long it took for Light House's pledge to create a new, larger and more comprehensive facility to come to fruition. The \$8.2-million campaign officially closed on Oct. 19 with the ribbon-cutting ceremony that celebrated the opening of the new shelter, situated at 10 Hudson St. in the shadow of the upscale [Annapolis Towne Centre at Parole](#).

Outside the new building, play equipment awaits the first children who will move in and the enclosed recreation area was so recently sodded that the seams still show. A healing garden, currently in the process of creation, will provide a contemplative space for residents. An embryonic community garden, sponsored by [Whole Foods](#), houses baby greens that should be ready by Thanksgiving. These gardens will offer the residents an opportunity to grow food for the shelter kitchens.

Despite the gray, cool weather, several hundred people turned out for the ribbon-cutting ceremony, with many top-flight politicians and charitable heads in attendance. Elizabeth Kinney, co-chair of the capital campaign and president of the board of directors, presided over the ceremony. Beaming much of the time, she energized the crowd by introducing a young resident of the shelter who had composed a rap song for the event. His performance brought the audience to its feet accompanied by boisterous cheers.



Kinney acknowledged the donations of the many individuals, church groups, politicians, organizations and businesses that contributed to the project, praising each in turn. Joe Gill, building committee chair, continued the kudos while lauding the power of community action.

"This has been a really amazing experience," Gill observed. "There's something that happens when we take our little stream and join it with the streams of others ... All of these streams have come together to make this possible."



Politician after politician rose to add their support to and admiration for the project — Speaker of the House Mike Busch, Senator John Sarbanes, Senator John Astle, First Lady Katie O'Malley, Chief Administrative Office for the county Dennis Callahan, among others.

Busch recalled times many years ago when he would walk to the downtown post office and literally step over the bodies of homeless people sleeping in the building. He noted that the old and

new shelters not only provide such people with basic amenities but give a voice to those who have no voice, particularly the children.

Sarbanes also added a personal touch, remembering when he first toured the old downtown facility on West Street. On a bed in one of the two family apartments sat two bags that "represented all the worldly goods of that family."

The invitation-only event offered tours of the facility, which will open its doors to residents on Monday. The shelter is many times bigger than the old building with women's and men's separate sleeping areas, common rooms, health room, teaching kitchen, employment resource center, training classroom and five reconfigurable family apartments. Artwork created by area high school students decorate the walls and donated handmade quilts — representing the "fabric" of the community — cover each bed and adorn some walls.

The only disappointing note of the event was the no-show of Michael Oher, offensive lineman for the Baltimore Ravens and the inspiration for the recent movie, *The Blind Side*. A natural selection for the shelter opening, Oher was once in circumstances similar to those of the people that the shelter serves.

Kinney lightheartedly expressed disappointment that Oher wasn't coming. A lifelong Redskins fan, she went to her first Ravens game recently in preparation for his visit and even donned a purple Ravens cap at the podium. When told he wasn't coming, she joked that she might go back to being a Redskins fan.

Oher promised via text message that he would visit the shelter at a later date and was "looking forward to a faculty tour after our run in the playoffs."



The event was chockfull of praise, promise and pride. As the first residents file in, the real work begins anew.

## Upcoming Fundraisers in Greater Annapolis to Support the Light House

Free Kickboxing & Yoga Class

**Date:** Oct. 23 (rain date is Oct. 24 at 8:30 a.m.)

**Time:** 11:30 a.m.

**Location:** [Rolling Knolls Elementary](#)

**Details:** [The Power of Fitness](#) will sponsor a free combined class of kickboxing and yoga to benefit the Light House. Please bring donations of non-perishable food and body care products.

[Fashion Show Fundraiser at Annapolis Towne Centre](#)

**Date:** Oct. 26

**Time:** 6 to 8 p.m.

**Location:** [Cadillac Ranch](#)

**Details:** Retails and restaurants from Annapolis Towne Centre at Parole will sponsor this fun-filled event with proceeds to benefit the Light House. For more information, [click here](#).

Costumes for a Cause

**Date:** Oct. 28

**Time:** 7 p.m. to midnight

**Location:** [Wild Willy's Rockhouse & Sports Saloon](#)

**Details:** Sponsored by the Rotary Club of South Anne Arundel County, this costume-themed event will feature live music by the Doug Segree Band. All proceeds benefit the Light House and Bountiful Backpacks.

