

Published March 12, 2010

## Light House shelter closer to goal

### Officials gather for 'topping off' ceremony at new site

By ELISHA SAUERS Staff Writer

As a crane lowered the lighthouse-inspired top onto the roof of the new Annapolis homeless shelter Thursday afternoon, staff and volunteers celebrated the near completion of the construction project at the Hudson Street site.

But Elizabeth Kinney, president of the Annapolis Area Ministries Inc., said the organization still has \$200,000 to \$300,000 to raise with just a few months before the scheduled opening this fall.

The odds and ends, such as bathroom fixtures, kitchen utensils and office equipment, are the remaining expenses, she said. And there is a lot of unfinished business to shore up, including the sale of the 206 West St. property.

"We're still looking for a buyer, and that's really hard right now," Kinney said.

Still, shelter officials said generous donations are coming in, including a "last-minute" donation of \$700,000 from Annapolis couple John and Terri Hussman from their charity, the John P. Hussman Foundation.

The new shelter is coming as the number of homeless continues to grow and the money to help them become more scarce. Because of space limitations at the current shelter, roughly 500 people, including about 150 children, are denied services each year, Kinney said.



Joshua McKerrow — The Capital

Attendees of the Light House homeless shelter's 'topping off' ceremony signed their names on the last piece to be lifted on the building's roof Thursday afternoon. The shelter, on Hudson Street, is about two-thirds complete and will begin assisting clients when it officially opens this fall.

The new 24,000-square-foot facility will allow the shelter's staff to help about 1,500 people a year, shelter staff said.

At the ceremony, Kinney announced the ministries were officially renaming the "topping off" structure the "Hussman Beacon of Hope." John Hussman christened the beacon by breaking a champagne bottle against it after attendees had all used thick black markers to sign it.

The Hussmans said they originally became involved with the shelter as volunteers through St. Anne's Church on Duke of Gloucester Street. Terri Hussman said she wanted to make the donation to the Light House because it was a support service "with some skin on it."

"It's not just a place to live for a little while," John Hussman said. "It provides support and transition services, too, so that it can transition a person to a typical, productive life. And, in that sense, supporting the Light House shelter is a way to intervene at a point when someone's life is at a crossroads and to affect its direction."

Coming this far in the project would not have been possible without the partnership of the county and the city and the help of the state, shelter staff said.

The state provided grant money to help locate the new facility's site, and county executives Janet S. Owens and her successor John R. Leopold also have allocated funding to the Light House vision.

And the city of Annapolis also provided grants and waived about \$123,550 in fees.

Leopold, city Mayor Josh Cohen and House Speaker Michael E. Busch, D-Annapolis, spoke during the ceremony.

Cohen praised the project as well, adding that its fruition speaks to the values of the community.

"Budgets are moral documents," he said. "They reflect spending priorities, but they also show how a city values its more vulnerable residents. This is a testament not just to the tremendous need in our area, but the confidence the city has in the Light House and the role that it plays in our social safety net."

For more information on financial giving for the new homeless facility, visit [www.annapolislighthouse.org/new-shelter-landing.html](http://www.annapolislighthouse.org/new-shelter-landing.html).