

What's Up?

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New Light House Shelter Cuts Ribbon, Opens to the Community

Shortly after 5 p.m. today, local dignitaries cut the ribbon on Annapolis' prized community shelter, officially ending several years of campaigning, fundraising, and construction, and beginning a new chapter in providing families-in-need and the homeless with safe shelter and progressive programs to help them re-enter society as productive citizens.



The opening of the pristine Lighthouse Shelter at 10 Hudson Street, located on the outskirts of the state capital near Parole, represents “Many streams of community support coming together to create a river of opportunity,” as Joe Gill, a past-president of Annapolis Area Ministries (AAMI) Board of Directors and driving force of finance advocacy stated at the grand celebration.

Gill was among several constituents who spoke at the ceremony, which included addresses given by current AAMI Board President Elizabeth Kinney, Congressman John Sarbanes, House Speaker Michael Busch, Senator John Astle, and Maryland First Lady Katie O’Malley.

The tented event drew an estimated crowd of two hundred, who listened to the opening remarks and well-deserved number of “thank yous” offered to those who made the new Lighthouse Shelter a reality.

Congressman Sarbanes recounted seeing first-hand the need for the new facility after visiting the old. Senator Astle spoke briefly about the “invisible problem” of homelessness in the city and county that many residents are unaware of, yet needs to be addressed. Speaker Busch injected modesty and a touch of humor, recalling a fundraising event in which he participated. “Joe [Gill] asked me to take a bike ride to raise funds for the new shelter and I agreed. Soon enough, everybody seemed to be passing me along the course. Dead-tired afterwards, I asked Joe if there was anything else I could do for him. He said, ‘How about passing a bond bill or two for me.’ I told him, ‘Sure thing, as long as I don’t have to ride another bike.’”

After the celebratory remarks and ribbon cutting, guests were treated to a tour of the three-story, 24,000-square-foot shelter. The building represents a major step in helping the homeless community by providing four key facilities within: emergency shelter for 30 men and 15 women; transitional housing for five adults and 20 children; a resource and support center complete with 12 computer work stations, job counseling, and life-skill services; and day center for the chronically homeless, which offers basic care to long-term homeless individuals during the day.

But the new building is much more than walls, stairs, beds, and even computers. It's about the people within and those who've contributed immensely to making the Lighthouse Shelter experience positive and productive. Throughout the facility colorful artwork hangs, created by a joint partnership between ArtWalk, the Providence Center, and Lighthouse Shelter, and funded by the TKF Foundation. Handmade quilts are also among the décor and on the beds; an acquisition project dreamed and done by shelter volunteer Leanne Tirpak. A central community room features a teaching kitchen in which residents can try their hand at culinary arts. An art and music therapy room is just down the hall, as is a library.

Outside, a playground beckons children, while a community herb garden, sponsored by Whole Foods Market of Annapolis, provides both sanctuary and savory flavors to be picked when the time is right. Altogether, top to bottom, the Lighthouse Shelter represents the community; those who are in need of a helping hand and those willing to extend theirs.

To learn more about the Lighthouse Shelter, visit Annapolislighthouse.org.