

Family day center breaks ground

By Betty Taylor New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung | Posted: Thursday, May 8, 2014 12:22 am

Just before he blessed the site with holy water, the Rev. James Wasser reminded the crowd gathered at the groundbreaking ceremony of the new Family Promise Day Center, “When you give blessings on a structure or construction, it isn’t just the priest or pastor giving the blessing, it is all of you.”

The Rev. Jason Adams, senior pastor at First United Methodist Church of New Braunfels, prayed for the center to be a place of learning and spiritual growth — a place where mercy and compassion flowed.

City officials and leaders, members of The Institute of Public Health and Education Research, and members of Family Promise of Greater New Braunfels commemorated the beginning of construction during the Wednesday afternoon ceremony at the site at 295 Rosewood Ave.

The day-use facility, for families with children overcoming homelessness, will be located on the TIPHER campus adjacent to the Westside Community Center and is a collaboration between TIPHER and Family Promise of Greater New Braunfels. The building will be located on the same property as the House of Hope/Centro Med Dental Clinic and the River City Rehabilitation Clinic.

Currently, Family Promise operates a day center on Post Road. That lease expires in April 2015.

Stacey Minor, FPGNB network director, said one major blessing of the new facility would be that it would offer three full bathrooms, as opposed to the current facility in which 14 individuals share one bathroom.

“It will have computer classrooms, private offices, a boardroom and a TIPHER office,” Minor said.

The 1,944-square-foot facility also will offer a laundry area; showers; a children’s quiet area; storage and locker area; a break room and family lounge area; and a children’s playground.

In keeping with the Family Promise mission to help families with children overcome homelessness and achieve and sustain independence, the center, in its new location, will continue to offer a place for adults to learn professional skills and conduct job searches while their children are in school.

As part of the program, the center is open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. In the evenings and overnight, Family Promise guests are cared for by area churches that provide meals and overnight lodging. Family Promise opened in July of 2013.

“More than 20 congregations are involved in Family Promise,” Minor told the crowd, adding that they were the heart and soul of the program. “If we did not have them and their volunteers, there would be no Family Promise.”

Minor said that since opening its doors in July of 2013, Family Promise had seen four families

graduate from the program; had two vehicles donated to graduating families; and had established an endowment fund.

Peggy Sue Martin said she wasn't sure about the program when she called the first time and then backed out.

"We were in a bad place. We lost everything in a matter of weeks ... We had no car, no nothing," she said.

She called again, and in March, her family, which includes her 8-year-old twins, Isabelle and Isaiah, graduated from the program.

"It was not like anything we expected," she said. "I had no idea New Braunfels had so many congregations."

"This is a glorious day for us," said Dr. Carlos Campos, TIPHER executive director. "It took a lot of work to make this day happen."

Seidmoore Construction Co., whose services are being provided on a pro bono basis, projects completion and move in by the first quarter of 2015, providing the additional funds required to complete the project can be secured, according to a press release.

"We still need to raise between \$30,000 to \$50,000," said Doy Cole, president of the Family Promise board and chair of the TIPHER board.

The project is about 75 percent funded and proceeding on faith that the additional funds or in-kind services will be donated. Funds secured for the project to date have been provided by private donors and the City of New Braunfels Community Development Block Grants.

The total cost of the facility is estimated to be between \$180,000 and \$200,000.

TIPHER and Family Promise have agreed to a long-term lease agreement. TIPHER will own and lease the building to Family Promise of Greater New Braunfels for \$1 per year. In the evenings, the center will be used for TIPHER health education classes, as well as other education classes, and for board meeting.

Family Promise opened its doors in July 2013 with the help of local churches, individual donors, the United Way of Comal County and McKenna Foundation. Hosts provide overnight housing and meal for families for one week every two to three months on a rotating schedule. Families travel to the day center each day to prepare for the day (shower, dress) and leave for school or work.

For information, visit www.fpgnb.org.