

# Hope Harbor Volunteers Break Ground For New Women's Center

BY SUSAN USHER

A love story with a different twist unfolded Friday as local volunteers broke ground for what will become the Women's Resource Center in Brunswick County.

The project represents an expansion of services for Hope Harbor Home, the local non-profit group that provides shelter and counseling for victims of domestic violence, as well as the combined efforts of numerous individuals and groups.

While some people might have objected to holding the groundbreaking for the center on Valentine's Day, said Jack Hancox, Hope Harbor Home board chairman, he found it both "poetic and prophetic."

"There is eternal hope in the hearts of the women and children served by this facility that they too will be somebody's Valentine and have someone to care for and cherish them," he told a group of about 40 men and women at the noon ceremony at the building site north of Supply on U.S. 17.

With its expansion, Hope Harbor plans to offer additional services aimed at strengthening individuals and their families, giving them the skills they need to mend relationships and forge new ones.

While providing emergency shelter will remain the center's top priority, the not-for-profit agency plans to network with other community service agencies to either bring additional programs to clients at the center or to assist the center in developing its own programs in six distinct areas: wellness, economics, parenting, education, substance abuse, self-esteem and growth in personal relationships.

In their own labor of love, starting 8 a.m. Monday, Feb. 24, Baptist Men's Brotherhood construction teams from across the state will begin framing and roofing the 32-by-40-foot structure, while other laborers and volunteers from the local community will finish the job over the weeks to come.

The new center will include five offices and a large meeting room that can be divided into two smaller rooms. Its completion will also free up one bedroom at the shelter that is now being used as an office.

A \$10,000 one-time grant from the Janirve Foundation will provide the major cash contribution for the project. The private foundation in Asheville was established by the late Irving J. Reuter and emphasizes social services, health care and education. Additional funds will come from donations and from a fundraising project in which supporters will buy a "square of hope" in a quilt being made by volunteers to hang in the foyer of the center.

"Between the Baptist Men and the South Brunswick Islands Home Builders Association, that's how we're getting it done," said Carson "Pete" Durham, chairman of the building committee. "We're going to have about a \$60,000 building with about \$25,000 in it."

Local contractors, including an electrician and plumber, are providing labor at reduced prices, and suppliers are providing materials at reduced cost.

"We've had the public's support," said Hancox. "It just shows what you can do when the community is behind you."

Hancox said he's never worked with any other organization that has the same camaraderie and "get it done attitude" as the Hope Harbor Home board.

With a paid staff of six full-

time and one weekend employee and 12 volunteers, the shelter already provides a 24-hour hotline, emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence and their minor dependents, individual counseling, support groups for women and for children, and court advocacy.

Hope Harbor Home opened the doors of its shelter in April 1988 and has since served 1,037 women and children.

"That's just a little indication of the impact this organization is making," said Hancox, paying tribute to Camp United Methodist Church of Shallotte and its small corps of volunteers who first saw the need for the shelter and pursued it.

"One person can have a dream for their area and community and just stay in there....," he concluded. "It's come a long way."

## Center To Offer Resources For 'Families In Trouble'

The new Women's Resource Center has evolved from the current efforts of Hope Harbor Home to meet the needs of the women and children who seek shelter there.

The new facility will serve as a "resource center for families in trouble," according to Jack Hancox, board chairman. Domestic violence is often a symptom of other problems within a family that members are having trouble dealing with—from substance abuse to financial stress.

While working with victims of domestic violence, said Director Cathy Swaim, the agency realized a need for service to the women and their families in the other areas where their lives have been disrupted.

"Things follow the director's lead," she said. "My background is in working with the entire family. The board also embraces that view."

"This is not necessarily the philosophy of all shelters," she continued, "but there are 17 shelters in North Carolina that do provide services for the batterer as well as the victims of domestic violence."

"Most of the women who come through the shelter do go back home and they're asking for help," said Ms. Swaim.

Along with the services now proposed, the center eventually expects to work not only with the women and children who are victims, but with their batterers as well.

"Even if she (the victim) doesn't stay with him, he's going to marry someone else. The only way to end the cycle is to do something about him."

Meanwhile, expanded services will help women who come to the center strengthen their own skills and their own sense of well-being.

Typically a victim of abuse has little or no self-esteem, said Ms. Swaim. Helping "empower" a woman to understand and appreciate her own self-worth is one of the first steps in helping her re-establish family and personal relationships.

Many of the women seeking services at the shelter have less than a high school education; the Brunswick County Literacy Program has agreed to provide tutors to work with clients one-on-one to improve their basic skills.

The center program will also incorporate training to help clients improve their parenting skills and re-establish appropriate relationships with their children. In many dysfunctional homes children take on inappropriate roles, such as older children "parenting" younger siblings.

Classes will also be developed to help clients gain financial independence and learn to manage their household finances—developing a budget, value shopping, balancing a checkbook.

While helping women regain their mental "health," the center will also help clients regain their physical health with an emphasis on personal hygiene, planning of balanced meals, family planning and recognizing the need for medical and dental care for themselves and their children.

Other programs will help clients deal with substance abuse.



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

HELPING BREAK GROUND for the new center are (from left) Crystal Williams, Miss Brunswick County; Katherine Shawver, former Hope Harbor board chairman; Cathy Swaim, director; Brenda Lombardi, former client and volunteer; Carson "Pete" Durham, building committee chairman; and Jack Hancox, board chairman.

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## PIE ASKS FOR HELP

# Brunswick Volunteers Sought For Student Exchange Effort

How would you like to be in charge of area households and schools hosting foreign exchange students, or actually be one of those host families?

PIE (Pacific Intercultural Exchange), a non-profit organization, has contacted the Brunswick County Volunteer and Information Center (VIC) asking for help finding interested persons.

The PIE program, according to east coast office director Bruce Wolven, "must first recruit and train an area representative who is responsible for maintaining contact with the student, the host family and the school."

PIE brings students into the United States for three-week cultural homestays, six-week summer stays, six- and ten-month academic programs and intensive language programs, he said.

Volunteers will be prepared by Wolven through interviews and training, he said, adding that "area representatives run the program for us."

"They derive a great deal of satisfac-

tion from their involvement in the program," Wolven said, "and we reimburse them for expenses so that there's no financial burden."

PIE plans to look into possible placement of foreign exchange students in Brunswick County schools as well, he said, but first the area representatives must be chosen and trained.

"Looks like a great program," Pete Barnett, VIC's executive director, said in a recent telephone interview. "We just can't accommodate it with any current, known volunteers."

Wolven asks interested Brunswick County residents to call him toll-free at the Charlotte PIE office, 1-800-346-7536, for more information.

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