

Hankinson House: Fundraising goal increased

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Olga Consorti, CEO and president of the St. Joseph's Lifecare Foundation speaks at a groundbreaking ceremony on Wednesday, October 9, 2013 in which it was announced that the fund raising goal for the construction of Hankinson House has been reached. (BRIAN THOMPSON/BRANTFORD EXPOSITOR/QMI Agency)

The St. Joseph's Lifecare Foundation has surpassed its fundraising target of \$5 million in support of the new Hankinson House hospice.

Foundation officials announced Wednesday that they have raised \$5,013,620 through their Redefining Hope campaign.

But they're not stopping there.

They've increased their goal to \$6,730,000 to support new plans that will result in a bigger and better hospice, which is currently under construction on the St. Joseph's property, off of Grey Street.

"We're so thankful for the incredible support of the community for putting us over our original goal," Olga Consorti, the foundation's president and CEO, said Wednesday during a ceremony at

"However, when we were approached with the challenges and limitations of the original design we saw an opportunity to work with the facility board to ensure that together we provide the very best hospice facility that our community deserves.

"As such we have taken on the challenge of raising an additional \$1.7 million bringing our final campaign goal to \$6,730,000."

Consorti noted that the community has always been supportive of the foundation's fundraising efforts.

Hankinson House will be a standalone two-storey 25,620-square-foot hospice with 10 private bedrooms. As well, the building will feature many other amenities including outdoor covered porches for easy access to outdoor gardens.

Originally, plans called for a 15,000-square-foot addition to Stedman Community Hospice. But other factors, including an increased need for the services provided by the hospice, led St. Joseph's officials to review the original plans and come up with something better.

"Patient care and comfort were always our utmost concern," said Bob McGeein, chair of the St. Joseph's Lifecare Centre board of trustees.

"And we feared that adding to the current hospice would be too disruptive for our patients who were looking for peace and comfort during their last days," he said.

"Once we did the soil sample testing and determined that we would need to spend close to \$1 million on infrastructure costs due to high water tables in the back property, the choice to move the location to a free-standing building became quite obvious," he said.

"We would rather spend precious donor dollars on direct patient benefits, instead of weeping tiles and land costs."

Other factors contributing to a bigger facility included the launch of a community outreach program - the first program of its kind in Ontario. Under the program, a doctor and health-care team are sent to the homes of terminally ill patients in need of pain and symptom management.

When the program began, the outreach team visited 30 patients a month. Now, the team sees more than 414 patients a month.

As well, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care approached the hospice to help serve areas around Brantford, including Haldimand, Norfolk, Six Nations and New Credit.

None of those realities was in place when the original plans were drawn up. If officials had stayed with the idea of a 15,000-square-foot hospice, it would be above capacity even before it opened with no room for future growth.

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At a glance

WHAT: Hankinson House will be a two-storey 10-bed 25,620-square-foot hospice that will include a service kitchen, two kitchenettes, quiet spaces for all families, two bathing spas for patients and families and a small physician apartment for medical students doing their rotations in Brantford.

WHERE: It is being built just off Grey Street on the grounds of St. Joseph's Lifecare Centre and Stedman Community Hospice.

WHEN: The official ground-breaking ceremony was held Wednesday and construction is expected to be completed sometime in the summer of 2014.

WHO: The new facility is named in honour of Elsie and the late Lorne Hankinson who donated \$1 million toward the \$5 million project.

WHAT'S NEW: Originally, the new hospice was to be a 15,000-square-foot addition to Stedman Community Hospice. However, several factors forced officials to rethink their original plans and as a result, have come up with bigger and better hospice.

So far, \$5,013,620 has been raised to support the original fundraising effort which had set \$5 million as its goal. But with the new and improved facility under construction, St. Joseph's Lifecare Foundation are working to raise an additional \$1.7 million bringing their campaign goal to \$6,730,000.

Those wishing to donate to the Redefining Hope campaign may give online at www.sjlc.ca, call the office at 519-751-7096, ext. 2475, or mail a cheque or Visa or MasterCard information to St. Joseph's Lifecare Foundation, 99 Wayne Gretzky Pkwy., Brantford, N3S 6T6.