

Celebrate Fort Collins' new homeless center

GORDAN THIBEDEAU • FEBRUARY 16, 2009

The other day I had the pleasure of walking through the Sister Mary Alice Murphy Center for Hope (Center for Hope) - the soon-to-open homeless day center at Blue Spruce Drive and Conifer Street in Fort Collins, and I must confess that I was overwhelmed by the realization of how the space will be used.

Then, I remembered the day several years ago when a young, very pregnant mother, a toddler and the father found their way into United Way's building.

They were homeless and had no place to be during the hours that the overnight shelter was closed. At the time, it was very frustrating to me to realize that we, as a community, had no place for them to turn.

There was no place where they would be welcome; no place where they could access help; no place where they could rest and be safe. Well, situations like that will be no more March 2, when the Center for Hope will open for business.

The Center for Hope staff will work with clients and connect them with the appropriate community resources for their particular needs. There will also be a variety of complementary services such as job assistance and housing resources. Literally hundreds of individuals and scores of organizations have played a role in moving the project forward.

This building is a great example of what can be achieved when we collectively take to heart the words of our new president and recognize that in this "new era of responsibility ... we have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world."

I know that the responsibility to take action also extends to our community and this is just one example of how that responsibility is willingly accepted.

Please join me in celebrating the opening of the Center for Hope at 3 p.m. Feb. 27. We will dedicate the facility to Sister Mary Alice Murphy, a long-time homeless advocate in our community, and you will have an opportunity to tour the site.

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