

Heart, Love & Soul opens one-stop services center for homeless

Sr. Beth Brosmer Center will house organization's new Daybreak service program



Local officials and administrators from Heart Love & Soul food pantry were on hand to commemorate the opening of the Sr. Beth Brosmer Center, home of the new Daybreak program, which will increase access to services and offer additional support for people experiencing homelessness.

ARTICLE AND PHOTO BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO

Interim Tribune Editor

On Wednesday, local officials were on hand as Heart, Love & Soul food pantry cut the ribbon on the newly constructed Sr. Beth Brosmer Center. The center will house its new Daybreak program – a collaboratively designed one-stop program involving more than 30 partner agencies. The organization says the Daybreak program will increase access to services and offer additional support for people experiencing homelessness.

The new 6,000-square-foot center includes shower and laundry facilities, a computer lab, a com-

munity gathering space, and office space for partner agencies to provide services directly on site at a single location.

The organization says the program is the culmination of nearly a decade's worth of time and effort wherein service providers from the Niagara County Coalition for Services to the Homeless came together with the intention of identifying a sustainable way to stem the cycle of poverty in Niagara Falls. After identifying gaps in services as a major problem for those in poverty, the coalition developed the one-stop center as a way of increasing access to vital services.

Lyn Dyster, the fundraising cam-

paign co-chair, said fundraising efforts began in 2019 and went on to exceed expectations.

"Our intention was to raise enough capital enough ... for Daybreak to become self-sufficient and an endowment to ensure its sustainability in the future," Dyster said "Our goal was a moving target. Thanks to some incredible early success, we settled on \$3.5 million."

"I'm pleased to say today, we have raised slightly over \$4 million."

Local officials also applauded the collaborative efforts.

"This is a fabulous moment for the North End," Niagara Falls Mayor Robert Restaino said. "This is an opportunity to bring critical services, all in one place, so that it's easier for those who are struggling. Ultimately, what is important, is that in order for the city to continue to grow, we're only as

strong as our weakest links. And Daybreak and Heart, Love & Soul are working to do its best to help build up our weakest links."

Assemblyman Angelo Morinello said, "The vision here is now giving (impoverished people) a location they could come to, in one building to satisfy their needs. This vision should be the model for the entire state and maybe the entire country. In order to serve properly, you have to cover all bases."

The ceremony also provided something off a proper send off for former executive Sister Beth Brosmer, whom the center is named after. Brosmer stepped down last month after 11 years in the executive director role.

"One of the things that was always in my heart was to work with those who are materially poor. And here at Heart, Love & Soul, I've been there. Now, I feel I can move on. And so it's been a privilege to

be here for those 11 years and to serve those people that are here," Brosmer said. "I've been privileged to meet the best of myself and the worst of myself, both of which are blessings. And I've learned so much from our guests and I feel blessed by their presence, and allowing me to work for them."

In a short ceremony, the Rev. James J. Maher, C.M., president of Niagara University, blessed Brosmer's hands, who in turn blessed the hands of new executive director Mark Baetzhold. Baetzhold then blessed the hands of each of Heart Love and Soul's workers and volunteers in attendance.

Brosmer was heralded and applauded by numerous speakers but her impact and legacy was succinctly stated by J. Susan Ben, former director of Carolyn House.

"For the last 11 years, you have inspired us, you have encouraged us and you have tirelessly lead us," Ben said. "We all come from various walks of life, and this woman has lead us to serve the marginal. And it is your heart and your soul and your love, which has profoundly and positively affected this community. We carry you with us Sister Beth, every single day, as we serve in the respectful and positive way you've taught us to do."

"Know that we have felt your love and in return we are giving it back."

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