



NEWS ARCHIVE:

Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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COLUMBIAN PLACE: Ground breaking held for new affordable seniors housing project on 20 Street in Saskatoon, launched through efforts of Knights of Columbus KC Charities

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

KC Charities recently launched construction of a new 75-unit affordable housing complex for seniors in Saskatoon's core neighbourhood, working in partnership with all levels of government.

As bulldozers waited to begin the project a block away at 20th Street and Avenue L, some 175 people gathered inside St. Mary's parish hall Nov. 8, 2010 for a symbolic sod turning ceremony for Columbian Place, the latest faith-based affordable housing initiative undertaken by KC Charities in Saskatoon.

Knights of Columbus representative Bill Coumont opened the event, noting the tone of the gathering reflected "the spirit of Pleasant Hill, which is one of integration." A choir of some 45 students from St. Mary's Community School sang the national anthem on the hall stage, first in Cree and then leading the crowd in



MC Bill Coumont (left) introduced special guests at the ground breaking ceremony.



Children from St. Mary's School opened the celebration, singing O Canada in Cree and in English.

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English.

Coumont noted that the project includes 40 two-bedroom and 35 one-bedroom units and therefore is expected to house more than 100 seniors.

“This is a good dream, and we want everyone to share in our excitement,” said Bob Jeanneau, who has been involved in KC Charities’ move into affordable seniors housing from the beginning.

“This is our fourth phase of construction of senior’s housing since 1997. We currently have 127 housing units with over 150 residents

on Louise Street, known as Columbian Manor,” Jeanneau said, describing how when that site was fully developed, KC Charities approached the city to see what else could be done in other areas of the city.

“It is great for KC Charities to return to 20th Street, where KC Charities did fundraising from 1984 to 2006,” said Jeanneau, recalling the millions raised for charity at a now-closed bingo hall in the area.

“We have to remember that all this came about because of the spirit of volunteerism,” he added, recalling the efforts of thousands of members of the Catholic men’s organization in fundraising over the years. “Now many of our people who had skills in life have come together to put this project together.”

Helen Arnesen, president of the Pleasant Hill Community Association, thanked the Knights for initiating the project.

“After many years of our seniors struggling to find safe, adequate housing, the Knights of Columbus and its members have vowed to change that,” Arnesen said. “Over the years we have watched our seniors bring up their families and then have to move away from their neighbourhood to try and find a place in



KC Charities president Ron Martens; Saskatchewan Social Services Minister June Draude, MP Kelly Block and Mayor Don Atchison (left to right) symbolically turn the sod on a 75-unit affordable housing complex for seniors in the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood of Saskatoon. Columbian Place was initiated by KC Charities, which has also developed Columbian Manor seniors complex on the east end of the city.

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Seniors with connections in the community – whether that’s doing banking right around the corner or attending churches in the area – will now have “the option to remain in a safe, brand new centrally-located seniors complex in their very own community,” Arnesen stressed. “I want to thank the

Knights of Columbus members for their awareness of the needs and the wants of the seniors in our community.”

Fr. Jon Hansen, CSsR, pastor of St. Mary’s Catholic parish, asked God’s blessing on the project. “St. Mary’s has been part of this community for 90 years, and has seen many changes take place in this community. Many of the changes have been wonderful changes, some of them have been a bit harder to bear,” said the parish priest. “But this morning we’re celebrating a new, change, life, growth in our neighbourhood.”

Hansen added: “We are in this together to serve the most vulnerable in our community, including the seniors, and all those who need a helping hand.”

Kelly Block, MP for Biggar-Rosetown, brought greetings from the federal government. “This new facility is great news for those who need a hand up and for Saskatoon itself. By providing more rental options for low-income seniors, this rental project will contribute to the economic and social well being of the entire community,” she said.

The \$13.9 million project is happening because groups are working together, said June Draude, Saskatchewan Minister of Social Service, reporting that about \$8 million in funding for the project has come from the federal and provincial governments; about \$1.3 million from the city of Saskatoon, and about \$4.5 million (which includes owner equity and mortgage financing) from KC Charities.

“This is the type of project that shows how when we work together as partners, dreams can come true,” she said.

Saskatoon Mayor Don Atchison expressed appreciation to the Knights of Columbus for initiating the project, which he described as part of a much-larger revitalization of the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood.

In an interview after the celebration, KC Charities chair Ron Martens noted that the mission statement of KC Charities is to provide affordable, faith-based housing to seniors, and that is now all that the group focuses on. “There are future projects to look forward to,” he added.

In 1996 Saskatoon Knights of Columbus recognized the need for affordable housing for seniors and a committee chaired by Bob Jeanneau and Peter Harvey undertook the construction of a 62-unit apartment housing project known as Columbian Manor, which was expanded in 1999. Assisted living units were added in 2007. Again working in partnership with municipal, provincial and federal governments, KC Charities launched the current 75-unit complex as part of Saskatoon’s Pleasant Hill revitalization.