New Holston Home Chapel Taking Shape

BY LISA WARREN
STAFF WRITER

The new Christian Life Center at Holston United Methodist Home for Children is taking shape.

It has only been about a year since ground was first broken on the building, and already the structure is under roof. A ground-breaking ceremony for the new 18,000-square-foot facility was held on March 15, 2018.

The structure is almost completely now under roof, Holston Home President and CEO Bradley Williams said in an interview earlier this week.

The workers, he said, will "now be able to really make up some ground and, hopefully, no longer be deterred by weather."

In recent days, workers were busy installing stonework around the front of the building. Final completion of the

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SUN PHOTO BY LISA WARREN

Workers were busy in recent days placing stonework around the exterior of the new Christian Life Center at Holston United Methodist Home for Children. The new facility will house the Holston Home Chapel as well as recreational and performing arts functions, officials say.

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new structure is anticipated this summer, Williams said.

"Weather has certainly not be kind to our efforts," he said.

"The targeted completion date is Aug. 21. We hope that it will be a little earlier than that, but that's a conservative date that has been thrown out," Williams said.

Original plans were to have the project completed by this spring.

The facility is being built along Wesley Street, just down the hill from the Holston Home Beacon School, facing the State Route 70/US 11E truck route.

The cost for the new facility has not been disclosed by Holston Home officials; however, they have previously noted that the funds to cover the new structure's entire cost were raised from generous donors prior to the start of construction.

The Christian Life Center will not only become the new home for Holston Home's chapel, which is currently located in Beacon School, the on-campus school. The multi-purpose facility will also be used for recreation and performing arts purposes as well.

The greatest aim for the new structure, however, is another way to reach out and touch lives through the ministry of Jesus Christ, Williams said.

"We have some kids who are interested in faith and things of a spiritual nature. Others have no real interest. But if we do that space well, it will present the opportunities to reach out," he said. "We want the facility to be a beautiful building that complements our campus, but we've missed it if we just build a beautiful building and it's not a space where kids can encounter Jesus."

Growing needs at Holston Home were the reason for the new facility, Williams said.

Once the Christian Life Center is complete, the current chapel space at Beacon School will be converted into more space for school functions.

"We're in the process right now of accessing that," Williams said.

Among needs at the school are additional space for a computer lab and space for performing arts programs, he noted.

"I think we've got a few different ideas in the hopper," Williams said.

"We have a smaller room that we are using for a computer lab now," he said. Officials hope that additional space can be made in the school building for computer instruction for the Beacon students.

Holston Home is currently looking to fill a position for a computer lab technician, and there are other other open positions at the agency.

Williams said Holston Home is planning to take a youth group on a mission trip to Guatemala in May. He noted that plans are also in the works to host an Easter drama with the new speech and drama program.

"We hired a new teacher for the drama program back in the fall," Williams said. "And so we are gearing up for that."

"Those are two, just-around-the-corner initiatives that we are working on," he added.

Once the Christian Life Center is completed, Williams said, there will be additional space to host theatrical and other performing arts productions on the Holston Home campus.

At the groundbreaking for the Christian Life Center last year, Williams said, "Our vision is that every aspect and material used in this building will reflect Jesus. From the stone and timber to the beautiful glass, we want our kids and their families to see that he is strong and stable as well as warm and inviting."

He added, "It is so cool to dream about what God has in store for kids and families that we haven't even met yet, and to imagine the part this facility will play in His plans."

Longtime Holston Home icon, the Rev. Charles Hutchins, who serves as director of church relations for the Christian-based ministry, called the new project at the groundbreaking event "a dream come true."

Hutchins noted that he has hoped and prayed for a new worship center for Holston Home for more than 70 years. "And now on Wesley Street, where the cows once roamed, it has come true," he said.

"So see, if you live long enough, dreams do come true," Hutchins said.

In quoting from Romans 8:24-25, Hutchins said, "For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it."

During the past year, Holston Home served nearly 650 youth and their families, according to the faith-based agency's latest annual report.

Holston Home is headquartered on 155 acres in Greeneville. The agency employs around 170 in service locations in Greeneville, Johnson City, Knoxville and Chattanooga and at a Family Service Center in Bristol, Virginia.

Holston Home offers a variety of services, including residential and group home care as well as foster care and adoption services. Its foster care program provides for children in a large portion of East Tennessee. Its Greeneville office provides services for children in Greene, Cocke, Hawkins, Hamblen and Jefferson counties. The Johnson City office serves the rest of the counties in Northeast Tennessee, while the Knoxville office serves about 15 counties around Knox County.

The agency also provides child day-care services to around 120 pre-school children through the Holston Home Children's Center and the Small Miracles day-care facilities in Greeneville.

Holston United Methodist Home for Children was founded in 1895 when Mrs. E.E. Wiley, a widow, took in her first homeless child. Since then, Holston Home has helped more than 8,000 children.

Holston Home is affiliated with the Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church, an area that covers all of East Tennessee, the western-most 17 counties in Virginia, and a little bit of territory in North Georgia. More than 873 United Methodist Churches in those areas make up the Holston Conference.