
OPERATION TOM SAWYER REACHES OUT to the YOUTH of SOUTHERN MARYLAND

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A group of involved, excited and proud project participants joined in the ground breaking ceremony June 12 in Waldorf Maryland.

A fifteen month-long search for and feasibility study of an appropriate undertaking for the Operation Tom Sawyer Foundation, Inc. (O.T.S.) in Southern Maryland came to a close on June 12, in the St. Charles Industrial Park, Charles County. There, the Suburban Maryland Building Industry Association members, staff and elected county officials joined with the director and staff of the selected organization, the Tri-County Youth Services Bureau (TCYSB) for the official groundbreaking ceremony for a 10,000 square foot office and counseling facility slated for completion during 1986. The groundbreaking placed the project into a new phase, after months of planning, discussing and decision-making.

OTS FACES ITS BIGGEST CHALLENGE

Accepting the commitment and undertaking the project is easily the biggest

challenge ever faced by the O.T.S. Foundation since the building will be constructed entirely from donations of labor and materials solicited by the Southern Maryland Chapter of the Association from

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the SMBIA' membership at large. The evolution of the idea into an operative project was a slow, carefully planned progression, based on the Association's

and the O.T.S. Foundation's commitment to the community that it represents. With the repair and restoration of the severely fire-damaged Milton E. Kettler Boys' Home in Montgomery County newly finished and re-opened in the spring of 1985, the energies of the O.T.S. Foundation's work turned toward the southern part of the state. The Southern Maryland Chapter began investigating different organizations in the region, hoping to identify a similar type of project in that area for adoption.

MEETING THE CRITERIA

As with the other two groups supported by the O.T.S. Foundations (The Boys' and Girls' Homes of Montgomery County and the Family Crisis Center of Prince George's County), the Southern Maryland Project had to meet the original criteria laid out by the 1980 Public Relations Committee and then-President (of SMBIA)

Bob Mitchell: the project must be identified with the Shelter Industry and a major part of the Association's involvement must be in the form of direct services and "hands-on" assistance rather than straight, financial contributions. Based on these guidelines and after much consideration of the fact that the designated organization served all three of the Southern Maryland counties- Charles, Calvert and St. Mary's-

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the Tri-County Youth Services Bureau was selected.

The construction of the office and counseling facility for the TCYSB differs greatly from the other O.T.S. commitments in the two northern counties. The TCYSB in itself, is not a house, or a live-in center, but yet the services of the TCYSB helps to preserve and improve the family and quality of the home-life setting for children of all ages and teens, and their families.

"The Tri-County Youth Services Bureau is a comprehensive mental health agency for kids, and we deal with the whole range of emotional and mental problems with the exception of drug and alcohol abuse," remarked Executive Director Dr. C.W. Duncan recently. The availability of this counseling, free of charge to the children and their families, gives hope to troubled youth, and offers the chance to put a family back together.

TRI-COUNTY YOUTH SERVICES BUREAU

The TCYSB was founded in 1971 by the state of Maryland as part of its preventive programs for troubled children and has since evolved into the premier agency of its kind in the state, and on the East

Coast. Its success rate is impressive, with 98% of the troubled youth being rehabilitated staying trouble-free for at least two years after treatment. The Bureau recently began offering its assistance to children of all ages, even as young as toddlers, since 48% of the children they help were falling under the age of twelve. But, the waiting

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list grows daily. Currently, over 600 children are waiting for counseling services. The existing facility cannot accommodate these expanding numbers. Operating on a limited state-funded budget, the TCYSB must put these children and teens on "hold", knowing full well that their problems will not wait. The construction of a new facility in the Waldorf area can help to relieve the long waiting list, and improve the children and teens' quality of life in close proximity to their homes. (Currently, the TCYSB is headquartered out of Charlotte Hall, with branch offices in Waldorf and Lexington Park.)

THE EVOLUTION OF THE PROJECT

The first step in making the idea a reality was selecting and obtaining a site for the construction of the project. A property deed to a one-acre site valued at \$50,000, in the St. Charles Industrial Park in Waldorf, was donated to the O.T.S. Foundation for use in the project by Ray Keeney as a representative of St. Charles Associates, Interstate General Corp. The location of this parcel was ideal in that the largest number of children in need were coming from the Waldorf area.

With the donation of the site, the project began to take shape. The Southern Maryland Board of Directors of SMBIA formed the Southern Maryland O.T.S. Project Committee, headed by Ray Keeney as chairman, assisted by Barry Nelson of

Revere Homes, Steve Anlian of H.O.H. Associates, Bob Heier of FEDCO Systems, Inc., Jack Hoke of Lowes of Charles County, Pete Breck of Paragon Properties, and Pete Ogden of Southern Maryland Oil. They were joined by the Southern Maryland chapter president, John Howlin of Edward B. Howlin, Inc.

This group began active solicitations within the Southern Maryland membership. Site plans were drawn as a donation by DH Steffens; construction plans were donated by FEDCO Systems, Inc.; and project renderings were donated by H.O.H. Assoc. With the plans in hand, the Committee was ready to approach the O.T.S. Board of Directors. After receiving their unanimous support and a financial contribution, the Committee announced to the membership at the May 8 Southern Maryland Dinner Meeting their formal commitment to the Tri-County Youth Services Bureau project. Executive Director C.W. Duncan was on-hand, representing his staff and the area youth, to accept the pledge of constructing the office/counseling facility.

DONATIONS BEGIN TO POUR IN

After the formal declaration of intent, the O.T.S. Committee of Southern Maryland began meeting weekly, coordinating the donations and solicitation efforts. A strong public relations/information program began, with a brochure, designed as a donation by Hungerford Associates of Indian Head, and printed as a donation by Image Graphics of Silver Spring, sent out to the entire membership, along with a letter and a material list. The response was

"With the issuance of the building permits expected within days, the project is ready to begin, with clearing and site preparation."

tremendous, and donations began to flood

continued on page 30.

continued from page 29.

the Committee. (See the list of to-date contributions at the end of this article.) With Phase One of the construction process covered, the Committee went forward with a formal ground breaking.

On June 12, under a muggy, sultry sky, Dr. Duncan and Ray Keeney drove gold-plated shovels into the dirt in front of a sign proclaiming the site as "The Future Home of the Tri-County Youth Services Bureau-Waldorf Office". Senator James Simpson and Delegate Samuel Linton, both from District 28 (Charles and St. Mary's Counties) joined with local Charles County Commissioners Marland Deen (President), and Loretta Nimmerrichter, and donating SMBIA members and TCYSB staff to celebrate the event. With the issuance of the building permits expected within days, the project is ready to begin with the clearing and preparation of the site.

.....AND NOW THE WORK BEGINS.....

The Suburban Maryland Building Industry Association and the O.T.S. Board of Directors wholeheartedly supports the Southern Maryland project. This project and the services being provided by the Tri-County Youth Services Bureau are invaluable to the children of these three southern counties. The Association is committed to achieving the goal of providing the counseling and office center, and hopes and encourages all members to join in important and critical venture.

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Currently, a flow chart is being formulated to determine where the project is and will be during the estimated four to six month construction phase. While donations of materials and supplies have been

abundant, the donation of labor to utilize these materials have been coming in at a slower rate. Especially needed are brick-laying donations and painting donations, since all the brick and paint have been donated. Members who have labor and/or materials to donate should contact Ray Keeney at 843-7333, or Hamer Campbell or Heather O'Rourke at SMBIA, 572-5900.

The excitement, pride and determination present in the people involved with this project is impressive and contagious. When completed, the endeavor will be one that reflects back a truly positive image of SMBIA and the industry it represents. But that reflection will pale in comparison with the personal feelings of accomplishment and community involvement that association with the project will foster. ■



▲ In February, 1986, the Southern Maryland Board of Directors began the project in earnest, with the review of the blueprints. (Pictured left to right are Pete Ogden, Ray Keeney, Jeff Errington, John Howlin, Barry Nelson, Jack Hoke and then-board member Dave Whitten).



◀ Ray Keeney (left) Chairman of the Southern Maryland O. T. S. Committee and Dr. C.W. Duncan, Executive Director of the Tri-County Youth Services Bureau turned the first shovels of dirt on the site for the counseling/office project.