

Citizens Concerned for the Homeless takes over Keys to Hope



Photo by Jessica O'Brien Representatives of Citizens Concerned for the Homeless welcome Keys to Hope Resource Center into its organization. Pictured, from left, are Jim Musial, director of Sand Castle Shelter; Nancy Philippi, president of CCH; Mike Kilbourne, former director of Keys to Hope; and Kristin Patterson, director of Grace Learning Center.



By JESSICA O'BRIEN
Staff Writer

Published: Thursday, April 10, 2014 5:06 PM CDT

MICHIGAN CITY — Citizens Concerned for the Homeless (CCH) has assumed responsibility for the Keys to Hope Resource Center.

Former director of Keys to Hope Mike Kilbourne signed a memorandum of understanding with CCH President Nancy Philippi on Wednesday completing the deal. This memorandum put the agreement into writing, clarifying what the transfer included, Philippi said.

Keys to Hope was a project created by Kilbourne that aimed to fulfill his vision of providing shelter and services to homeless men, women and families in La Porte County.

Growing up, Kilbourne experienced homelessness. As an adult, he made it his mission to end homelessness, helping as many people as possible become self-sufficient.

Along the way, however, he experienced trouble with this vision, struggling to get the Keys to Hope program off the ground. Turning to Citizens Concerned for the Homeless, Kilbourne found a group that was ready and willing to help turn his dream into a reality.

Philippi said CCH was contacted, not only because of a need for funding, but also because of the experienced and capable directors currently with the CCH organization.

"We have been in the business of homeless shelters for decades," she said.

Kilbourne was pleased with the transaction, trusting the CCH to carry out his vision.

"They are committed to serving the population that needs to be served," he said, adding he would stay on with the resource center as a volunteer.

With a goal of opening later this year, the Keys to Hope Resource Center will be located at 1802 Franklin St. The building is currently owned by the Knights of Columbus and is in the care of Ed Merrion, who has made it available to the CCH, Philippi said.

Citizens Concerned for the Homeless operates two agencies for the purpose of helping the community's disenfranchised – Sand Castle Shelter for the Homeless and Grace Learning Center.

The primary difference between Sand Castle Shelter and what the Keys to Hope plans to offer is the availability to different demographics. While Sand Castle provides rooms to single women and families – either a mother or father with children or an entire family – the facility is not available to single men.

"The key is family," Philippi said describing the Sand Castle policies.

Kilbourne's vision for Keys to Hope, however, is a place anyone can receive assistance, no matter their demographic, and CCH has agreed to keep that belief in place.

Keys to Hope also will offer social services to its clients such as case management and job skills training. Using the location during daytime hours, the clients also will have access to a computer lab, laundry facilities and a telephone.

It will operate under the direction of Jim Musial, who also oversees the Sand Castle Shelter. He said in addition to providing a place to sleep and spend daytime hours, the focus is to help get people jobs and health insurance.