

Meals on Wheels getting kitchen back



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REX C. CURRY/Special Contributor

The Visiting Nurse Association will open the Patrick and Beatrice Haggerty Center in May. Working on the center were Patrick Haggerty Jr. (left), VNA vice chairman; Helen Nixon, chairwoman; and Robert Carpenter, president and CEO.

The long wait is over for the Visiting Nurse Association's Patrick and Beatrice Haggerty Center at 1440 W. Mockingbird Lane.

It opens the first week in May.

It would be quite apt to call this home of VNA's Meals on Wheels program the Phoenix project, after the mythological bird that rose from its own ashes, because that's what Meals on Wheels has done in real life.

Fire struck the Meals on Wheels kitchens in February 2005 during a renovation that had started in December 2004.

VNA has been providing Meals on Wheels in Dallas County since 1973, and Robert Carpenter, president and chief executive of the VNA, is proud that meal delivery was never interrupted.

The kitchen had moved during the renovation to the Highland School in Irving. A few months later, it was moved to an abandoned La Madeleine bakery in Irving with larger kitchens while the future of the fire-scarred headquarters on Mockingbird Lane was debated.

After input from the community and other stakeholders, VNA's board of directors decided to rebuild a new center on the site.

TI, family gifts

At the request of Texas Instruments Inc., the building will be called the Patrick and Beatrice Haggerty Center. TI and the Patrick and Beatrice Haggerty Foundation each gave matching gifts of \$500,000.

TI wanted to honor the late Mr. Haggerty's managerial genius as an early TI chairman and chief executive and the Haggerty family's support for VNA.

Mrs. Haggerty, who died in 2003, was chairwoman of the VNA board of directors and played a key role during its first capital campaign in 1991. That effort allowed VNA to buy a headquarters building and build its original kitchen for preparing Meals on Wheels.

Patrick Haggerty Jr. is board chairman of the VNA Foundation and vice chairman of the VNA board of directors. Teresa Haggerty Parravano is a past board chair and a life member of the board.

"The Patrick and Beatrice Haggerty Center is an especially fitting tribute to my family's support for the principles embodied by VNA that began decades ago when our mother started volunteering to deliver Meals on Wheels," Patrick Haggerty Jr. said.

"Our mother and father believed strongly in the importance of service to the community. Their daughters and sons have continued their legacy of supporting those institutions that make our community a better place to live."

The new center has 21,660 square feet of space, with a boardroom, volunteer training rooms and offices for Meals on Wheels staff and volunteers.

The center will also house the Beatrice M. Haggerty Kitchen, which is 3,000 square feet larger than the old kitchen's 8,600 square feet and can produce twice as many meals a day – 14,000.

It has a specially built industrial dishwasher made in Scandinavia that can wash pots and pans, which is now done by hand. And 60-gallon kettles will replace ones worn out by use.

"This facility is proof that the Dallas community recognizes the crisis of hunger for many homebound and low-income individuals in our community, the community's willingness to volunteer and finance a solution, and their trust in VNA and our Meals on Wheels program to do something about it," Mr. Carpenter said.

Largest provider

"This now makes VNA the largest single provider of Meals on Wheels in the country."

In fiscal year 2007, VNA prepared 856,918 meals for home delivery. An additional 312,000 meals were produced for Dallas County's Senior Centers.

The original estimate to rebuild the center was \$5,291,800. Escalating building material expenses raised that to \$6,532,178.

Like most nonprofits, VNA gets most of its funding from the community and very little financial assistance from the state.

To close the gap between what insurance paid for and what a new building would cost, VNA embarked on fundraising initiatives that included the organization's first gala in March 2007. Called Wheels For Meals and More, the NASCAR-themed event raised more than \$286,000.

This year's Wheels For Meals and More is March 30 and will be co-chaired by Marianne Staubach and Mary Templeton. Bank of America is the presenting sponsor.

Mrs. Staubach is a VNA board member and longtime volunteer.

Helen Nixon, chairwoman of VNA's board of directors, says opening the Patrick and Beatrice Haggerty Center is an important step.

"Completion of the Patrick and Beatrice Haggerty Center is not the end of a long and challenging journey we embarked on after the fire but instead a beginning for the Visiting Nurse Association," she said.

"It means now being able to focus our attention on providing the care that the community has entrusted to us."
