

Akron News-Reporter WCNH celebrated at grand opening

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On Tuesday, September 13, the Akron Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting for the new Washington County Nursing Home. Shown from left to right in the back row are: Kim Krause, Nursing Home Advisory Board; Dencia Raish, Town of Akron and a Chamber member; Justin Wylie, Farm Country Auto Body and Chamber member; Lila Kessinger, Washington County Title and Chamber member; Edna Dalton, NH Advisory Board; Commissioner Terry Hart; Eva Bruns, NH Advisory Board; and Commissioner David Foy. In the front row, left to right are: Chamber Co-President, Marcia Bowland, Carol Benjamin, NH Advisory Board; Commissioner Lea Ann Laybourn; Nursing Home Administrator, Brenda Rhea; Earleen Friedly, NH Director of Nurses; and Susan Gunnels, Farmers State Bank and Chamber member,

The much-anticipated grand opening for the new Washington County Nursing Home was celebrated Tuesday, September 13. A ribbon cutting, held by the Akron Chamber of Commerce, kicked off the morning at 9:30 in front of the new homes. The celebration then moved to the Washington County Event Center, where tours of the new home began at 10 a.m.

Before the lunch began, Nursing Home Administrator Brenda Rhea opened the gathering by greeting everyone who was present. "I want to thank all of you for coming. This is a great event for our county and without your support, it would not have been possible," Rhea said.

She then introduced Commissioner Lea Ann Laybourn. "We are so delighted to have so many people and distinguished guests share our celebration of this day. This has been a seven year dream brought to a reality. When we started the project of building the homes, we were met with many obstacles. But with perseverance and prayer, the homes became a reality, thanks to the talented, determined and energetic enthusiasm generated by many persons involved in this project. Trust me, it opens today due to the blood, sweat, prayers and tears of individuals too numerous to give credit in this short time," Laybourn said.

Laybourn also gave a short history on the creation of the homes. Dr. Bill Thomas believed that our loved ones should go from their home to another home. As he said, "The bare white hallways of a nursing home are what the government wanted, but it's not what people needed."

She thanked Dr. Bill Thomas, Susan Ryan, JPL Development and Jeff Jensen, Lantz-Boggio, Architects, SB Clar, Chase Bank, New Market Tax Credit, Capital Impact Partners-NMTC, Colorado Health Foundation, State of Colorado Division of Housing-CHIF, Weinburg Foundation and GH Phipps.

She also especially thanked Carolyn Mickey, former nursing home administrator, who originally brought the idea of the homes up to the commissioners. "I cannot give enough emphasis and special thank you's to Chris Packer, County Administrator, and Carolyn Mickey, who in the infant stages of the Green House model were determined to provide our county an alternative environment for skilled long-term nursing care," she finished.

Susan Ryan, Senior Director of The Green House Project, then spoke to those attending. "This is a chance to practice life in a new way in the new homes. It is a chance to allow the residents to live, grow and thrive. I challenge the residents of Washington County to go into this with a full heart and with dedication, as the best is yet to come. This is a great opportunity for Washington County and for the residents of the county," Ryan said. Rhea concluded by saying how the staff had spent a lot of time in training so they would know what to do in the new homes. She thanked the Mustache Brothers, Kevin and Matt Brown, who prepared the meal and the staff of Farmers State Bank, whose staff members served the meal. She also gave a special thanks to the Washington County Nursing Home Advisory Board, who has spent a lot of time on this project and has helped raise funds for the new homes.

Pastor Bieker of Trinity Lutheran Church then gave the prayer before the meal. During lunch, Jason Weber and Jeff Shera of Lantz-Boggio Architects spoke to those present about how this was the first time they had designed homes such as these. "It has been a pleasure to work with everyone here to design something like these homes. We hope you like them, as much as we enjoyed designing them," Shera said.

Others from the audience also spoke about the homes. Several members of the Advisory Board said it had been a long battle, but everyone felt it was worth it. Right after 12 p.m., Susan Gunnels and Marcia Bowland, Treasurer and Co-President, respectively, of the Akron Chamber of Commerce, presented Rhea with \$500 in Chamber Bucks to purchase TV's for the resident's rooms, or other items that are needed in the new homes.

If the state gives their approval, moving day was held Tuesday, September 20. If they did not get the state's approval then it will not be long, and by the end of September, all the residents should be in their new homes. The tours for people to see the new homes were held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and the comments from people were mainly positive. There are always a few who are not happy, but all in all, it was a positive experience for everyone and these homes are a great opportunity for Washington County.