
Birkenfeld Trust invests \$500,000 in Morrow Manor project

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The C. Keith Birkenfeld Memorial Trust announced its commitment Oct. 13 to support the Morrow Manor project with a gift of \$500,000.

Morrow Manor is a collaboration between the Poulsbo-North Kitsap Rotary Club and the YWCA of Kitsap County to build eight units of much-needed affordable housing for survivors of domestic violence. The two organizations have been long-time partners to ensure services effectively exist for domestic violence victims and survivors, and this joint effort is an expansion of those services. Morrow Manor will double the YWCA's housing availability in Kitsap County.

"The Birkenfeld Fund Advisory Committee within The Seattle Foundation was aware of the silent but steady work that has been taking place for the past two years around this project to create more supportive, affordable housing for survivors of domestic violence," said Claire Bishop, an adviser to The Seattle Foundation, in an announcement of the gift.

"We're very excited to be part of the project and the impact it will make on the entire West Sound community. We know that Mr. Birkenfeld would be pleased with the unprecedented partnership between a local service club like Poulsbo-North Kitsap Rotary and a dedicated non-profit such as the YWCA of Kitsap County, who have jointly taken on a project of this scope and size."

Supporters of the project say supportive housing is one of the most important offerings to help survivors make long-term, transformational improvements to their lives. Last year, the YWCA of Kitsap County answered 4,711 domestic violence hotline calls and provided legal advocacy to 601 domestic violence victims; 35 women and 24 children fleeing domestic violence found safety in the YWCA's ALIVE (Alternatives to Living in Violent Environment) Shelter, which provides short-term housing and support.

However, last year as well, the YWCA of Kitsap County turned away 1,544 women and children because of lack of shelter and housing, and that number is expected to increase in 2015. A leading cause of homelessness in Kitsap County is domestic violence, project

supporters say. Short- and long-term transitional housing can help survivors continue the challenging journey of rebuilding their lives.

Morrow Manor is named in honor of Ardis Morrow, a longtime advocate for change in domestic violence laws and in DV services in the county. She is the founder of Eli's House, a duplex of transitional homes in Poulsbo named in memory of her great-grandnephew, a 3-year-old who died after being kicked by his father in 1986.

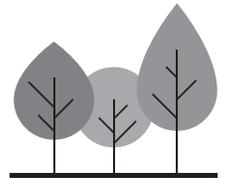
Morrow Manor will be one of three transitional housing opportunities in the area. The other is Tersha's House in Silverdale, named for Tersha Jo Brown, who was shot to death by her boyfriend in Sacramento in 2009.

"The issues of domestic violence are very familiar to our club, because we've been blessed with Ardis Morrow and her leadership to champion awareness around domestic violence since the tragic death of her nephew, Eli Creekmore, back in 1986," Poulsbo-North Kitsap Rotary Club President Naveen Chaudhary said.

Eli's House has been supported by Poulsbo-North Kitsap Rotary since 2003 and is now managed by the YWCA of Kitsap. The club has also championed a regional Domestic Violence Prevention Committee since 1996.

A vision for Morrow Manor emerges

When Kitsap resident Amy Sanford joined Rotary in 2012 and fulfilled one of her new member requirements with a personal history talk about her background, Sanford's story put renewed energy into the club's passion for finding lasting solutions to domestic violence. With the encouragement and support of fellow Rotarians who really knew her story, what Sanford shared would spark a passion within the club that would inspire the membership



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to create more long-term survivor stories for generations to come in the West Sound region.

Sanford bravely brought her past out of the shadows and into the light as she shared her many years of being trapped in an abusive marriage where domestic violence was routine. Unable to break free, she experienced severe physical injuries and emotional abuse, along with the havoc it wreaked on her career, and her children. Having a supportive, safe place to call home so she could begin to rebuild her life was key to achieving her present-day status, moving from victim to thriving survivor.

Sanford's story helped spark a passion in the club that led to vision for Morrow Manor, named in honor of Rotarian Ardis Morrow. Morrow Manor will feature eight housing units that will be located within the city limits of Poulsbo, in a peaceful residential neighborhood and adjacent to a new community park. Through its local non-profit Poulsbo Rotary Foundation, Poulsbo Rotary is raising the funds and will develop the housing project from construction through to completion, and then deed the debt-free dwellings and property to the YWCA. The City of Poulsbo will fund, develop and maintain the adjacent public park.

The goal of the capital campaign for the Morrow Manor project is \$2.1 million. While the start of construction is subject to the progress of the campaign, ground-breaking is anticipated to begin in summer 2016.

As the only state-approved provider of domestic violence services in Kitsap County, the YWCA will run the supportive services program for Morrow Manor residents, and manage the properties going forward in conjunction with their other housing, advocacy, and client management services. Unlike other short-term or transitional housing solutions, Morrow Manor offers a new

category of housing called supportive housing, where residents can stay on a sliding scale of affordable rents for up to six years.

"Morrow Manor will be a perfect complement to our portfolio of advocacy services and housing options that already exist in Bremerton, Silverdale, and Poulsbo," said Denise Frey, executive director of the YWCA. "The access to amenities like public transportation, schools, recreation, medical offices, and shopping is outstanding on this property. Courageous women and children from all over Kitsap and the West Sound are going to find refuge and a new beginning as enduring survivors who can thrive at Morrow Manor."

Chad Solvie, chairman of the Poulsbo-North Kitsap Rotary Domestic Violence Prevention Committee, added, "The Morrow Manor model is a local variation on the HomePlus model which was a national demonstration project between the YWCA of Kitsap County and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to provide urgently-needed solutions to homelessness, and greater access to fill the large gaps that exist in access to affordable housing. The results from that demonstration project were overwhelmingly positive. We know that by doing supportive housing in this way, it creates sustainable and on-going avenues to help many survivors get a fresh start on life, and break the painful cycle of abuse for the adults and so often the children that are involved.

"The quality of life for so many in our regional community will be elevated by the existence of Morrow Manor. Many lives and multiple generations will be transformed for the better by this project, and we extend great thanks to the generosity of the C. Keith Birkenfeld Memorial Trust for such a notable gift to the campaign."