



Almost Candid Photography

Pictured above: Ardis Morrow, Poulsbo Mayor Becky Erickson, YWCA Kitsap County Executive Director Denise Frey, Poulsbo Rotary Club President Mary Nader

Homes for victims of domestic abuse a step closer

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By Christian Vosler

POULSBO — With tears in her eyes, Ardis Morrow addressed the large group of gathered Rotarians, city officials and community members. She made it clear that this was something she couldn't have done herself.

"Because my name is out there, I get calls every day, probably two a week, and every call starts with 'Can you help me?' Morrow said. "I do what I can. And when I can't complete what they need, I go to you. Every one of you out there answers my call, nobody ever says no, and because of you this is going to happen."

Morrow, a longtime advocate for victims of domestic violence, spoke Friday at the ceremonial groundbreaking for Morrow Manor, an eight-unit housing project for survivors of domestic abuse in Poulsbo that's named in her honor. Against the backdrop of deep green trees off Noll Road that will soon be cleared to make way for the development, Morrow expressed her gratitude.

The \$2.2 million project, a joint venture between the Poulsbo-North Kitsap Rotary Foundation and YWCA of Kitsap County, will provide affordable housing for families and individuals who have been victims of domestic violence, YWCA executive director Denise Frey said.

"These houses will give them a safe space, where they will have space of their own in which to recover and get stronger to continue fighting the war, because it's not over for them," Frey said.

The development was put into motion in 2014 with the anonymous donation of 2.4 acres just southeast of the intersection of Noll Road and Languanet Lane. Morrow Manor will consist of four duplexes that can house up to eight families. Meanwhile, the city will turn half of the property into a public park.



Poulsbo Parks & Recreation director Mary McCluskey estimates the park will be finished in late 2017 or early 2018 and will cost around \$500,000.

While the Rotary has committed to the funding and development of the buildings, the operation of Morrow Manor will be under the purview of YWCA. Chad Solvie, chairman of Poulsbo Rotary Club’s domestic violence prevention committee, said once the buildings are finished they will be given debt-free to the YWCA.

“It’s not just about good deeds, it’s about making an impact on lives and the community,” Solvie said.

Solvie said initial construction and site work is expected to begin in October, and the units will be completed as funding becomes available.

The development’s capital campaign, “The Campaign to Build Brighter Tomorrows” has so far raised \$1.1 million of the \$2.1 million total cost of the development through a mix of private donations and grants, campaign director Elsa Watson said. Rent for the units will be a percentage of the tenants’ income.

Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness in the county, according to Frey. The YWCA currently operates only one emergency shelter in the county, which has 17 beds and limits stays to 90 days; two longer-term transitional housing units, Eli’s House in Poulsbo and

Tersha’s House in Silverdale, can house two families each. Tenants can stay at Morrow Manor for up to six years if needed, and Frey said she hopes the building will allow the YWCA to be flexible in addressing each victim’s situation.

“(The YWCA wants to) meet them where they are and work with them individually on how to empower them to make decisions and choices that will lead them to an independent life,” she said.

At Friday’s groundbreaking, Frey compared being in an abusive relationship to a war zone, except for the victims, she said, there is nowhere to come home to. Victims are presented the choice of living in their car or on the street with their children or returning to their abuser.

“Where does she come home from war?” Frey said. “That’s going to be Morrow Manor.”

Morrow became active in helping victims of domestic abuse decades ago when her great grandnephew Eli Creekmore was beaten to death by his father. She said she was “overwhelmed” by the response and she hopes she lives to see the first survivor take residence in the buildings.

“I’m just hoping that we’ll eventually have housing to help so many more people that need it,” she said.

