

Home to help tear down walls for vets

UPCOMING EVENTS

By [Michael Banks](#)

Posted Feb 29, 2020 at 6:41 PM

A large number of military veterans, their families and volunteers gathered Saturday to gut a home they hope will become a place for veterans to tear down the walls preventing them from re-entering civilian life.

Between 30 and 40 people grabbed hammers and crow bars and pulled down plaster board and ripped up carpet as they began the process of transforming the vacant home into a barracks that will house 11 veterans at a time.

“This is really vets helping vets,” said Bud Strobe, a Marine Corps veteran and president of Camp Centurion, a group dedicated to providing supportive housing for veterans in need.

The home, which sits on eight rural acres along Bess Town Road near Cherryville, formerly served as a group home for boys. However, the nearly 3,000-square-foot building has been vacant for most of the past seven years.

Strobe said his organization, which is made up of a seven-member board, signed a 10-year lease Saturday with the property owner, the Lutheran Support Group of Gaston County.

“This is going to be their home,” Strobe said of the building that will house a large room sleeping eight on the first floor and have three separate bedrooms in the basement. The home will be handicap-accessible.

Greg Dimmer, another Marine Corps veteran, was serving as the general contractor during Saturday’s demolition. By noon Saturday, all that remained inside were just a few walls as the volunteers had filled two bins full of material they pulled from the home.

Dimmer, who has operated the Dimmer & Sons Construction company in Gaston County for the past 25 years, said the home is solid and in “great shape.”

The next step is to obtain some architectural drawings and start gathering estimates on how much it will cost to complete the work. On Saturday, Dimmer estimated it will take between \$150,000 to \$200,000 to complete the project.

Dimmer’s brother, Brian, who is a contractor and operates R&B Construction, also helped out Saturday. While he’s not a veteran, Brian’s wife was formerly married to a soldier who was killed during the Iraq War.

Strobe said there is a need for a place like the Gaston Barracks.

“When these guys went into the service, they were teenagers. Everything was provided. They knew what they were going to wear, what they were going to eat,” Strobe said. “When they get out, they’re like, ‘What do I do now?’”

He said many of those who struggle feel like they’ve lost their identity. Strobe said he struggled when he returned home from Vietnam.

“I wandered about, job to job, place to place,” he said. “When you get out of the service, you don’t know who you are, what you’re supposed to do.”

Want to help?

Camp Centurion is seeking monetary donations to assist in building the Gaston Barracks. Those wanting to learn more about the group and how to donate can visit its website www.campcenturion.org.

The group will host the Gaston County Fly, Drive and Ride In event on Saturday, June 6 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Gaston County Airport. For more information on the fundraiser, visit www.flydriveridein.com.

Strope, who is a member and pastor of the veterans ministry at The Journey fellowship church in Lake Wylie, S.C., said the veterans will be able to stay for up to two years. They will work with the Gaston County office of Veterans Affairs to make sure they have their benefits in place and will also teach them how to get employment.

He said he, like many of those taking part Saturday, consider other vets as family.

“I call it the warrior’s bond,” Strope said. “It doesn’t matter what branch you served in. And we all fought in different wars together. It’s family.”

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