

Enid

Landing a leap of faith

CDSA makes progress for nonprofit center

BY DAVID PAGE
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ENID — The Community Development Support Association has reached its goal to raise \$2.5 million to renovate a downtown Enid building for a nonprofit center.

The money-raising campaign for the Community Solutions building was boosted by challenge grants from the Mabee Foundation and the Inasmuch Foundation, said Cheri Ezzell, CDSA executive director.

The CDSA raised the money to meet the challenge grants and has submitted documentation to the two foundations for approval, she said.

The building was purchased in 2008 and the campaign to raise the money started in 2009.

"The board bought the building before we had the money to renovate it," Ezzell said. "It was a real leap of faith."

Renovation for the former site of Newman's Department Store could start as soon as early 2012.

"We are about 95 percent complete with our plans," Ezzell said.

Architect Ken Corbin told the CDSA board he expects to complete plans for the renovations by the end of October.

The CDSA plans to renovate the 48,000-square-foot building for the agency's offices, a nonprofit center and early childhood resource center.

"We think we have room for eight of 10 agencies," Ezzell said.

Two nonprofit agencies — Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma's Enid satellite office and Goodwill Industries — have already agreed to be tenants, Ezzell said.

"We are negotiating with four or five other agencies," she said.

Legal Aid's Enid office could use additional space, said Mike Miller, acting executive director of Legal Aid of Oklahoma.

Claudia Kovar, Legal Aid's lone attorney in Enid, currently operates out of a 10-foot-by-10-foot office.

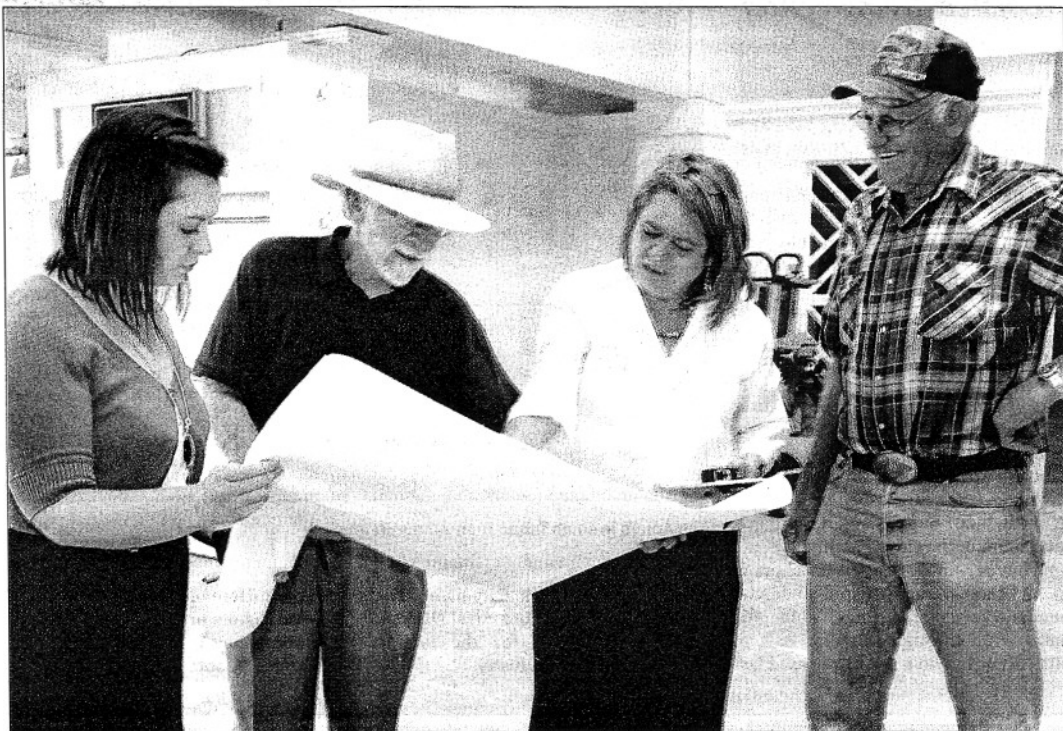
"If there is more than one person to visit at a time it can get a little crowded," Miller said.

The CDSA plans an open design for the building with a few offices and a training area that can be shared by the nonprofit agencies, Ezzell said.

"We wanted it to be open and inviting and flexible, because nonprofits change all the time," she said.

The main floor has 21,000 square feet and about half of that will be dedicated for early childhood development, she said.

The proposed early childhood resource center will provide information and technical assistance for fami-



From left, Erin Haney and Ken Corbin, from Corbin-Merz Associates; Cheri Ezzell, Community Development Support Association executive director; and Frank Wingfield, from Ron Moore Co., review renovation blueprints as workers install new windows on the top floor of the old Newman's Department Store in Enid. PHOTOS BY BONNIE VCULEK

lies and child care providers.

"We are trying to help the community understand that early childhood development is tied to economic development," Ezzell said in an earlier interview.

Shared resources should help CDSA and the other tenants to reduce expenses.

"There will be one receptionist and one copy room we will all share," she said.

The nonprofit tenants are expected to learn from each other.

"One of the things I always get my staff to do is talk with other nonprofits," Miller said. "When you have people who need legal services, they often need other services from nonprofits. If they can get help in the same building it will be nice."

The CDSA, founded 30 years ago, has long planned to have its own building, Ezzell said.

The agency has its 40 employees in two rented spaces in Enid that will be consolidated with the new office.

Much needed to be done when CDSA purchased the building at 116 S. Independence in downtown Enid in 2008 — it had not been updated since the 1940s.

Newman's Department Store moved out during the 1980s to the mall in Enid before closing several years later. The building was vacant for more than 10 years before being used as a furniture



Community Development Support Association fundraising campaign Chairwoman Mary Stallings, left, and board President Wade Patterson pause on the third floor of the Community Solutions building in downtown Enid. The organization, which began 30 years ago, has completed raising money for the renovation of the building.

store for several years, Ezzell said.

Some primary work has been done, including removing asbestos, replacing most of the windows and some bathroom renovations. There is still a large amount of electrical, heat and air and infrastructure work to do, she said.

Board member Brad Blankenship,

president and chief operating officer of Security National Bank, said the community always has been extremely generous.

"Everyone involved is to be commended, and more importantly the community of Enid and surrounding communities who helped," Blankenship said.