

Expansion 'a must' for children's treatment centre

BY ANDY COMBER

Directors of the John McGivney Children's Centre are laying the groundwork for a fundraising campaign that will result in a much-needed expansion of the facility located on Matchette Road in Windsor.

Formerly the Children's Rehabilitation Centre, the facility served fewer than 200 children when it opened in 1978, but those numbers have increased more than ten fold.

"Today we provide services for over 2,100 children with the same space," said the centre's executive director Elaine Whitmore during a media tour April 11.

"It is a must that we expand," said Whitmore.

The centre, one of 21 children's treatment centres in Ontario, provides education and specialized services for area children with disabilities such as cerebral palsy, autism, spina bifida, and muscular dystrophy.

"It is the sole provider of these types of services in Windsor and Essex County," said Whitmore.

The centre offers both preschool and school-aged programs in conjunction with its core rehabilitation services including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, communication therapy, recreational therapy, and family services.

In addition to daily pro-

grams, various medical clinics and camps are also held at the centre, along with toy and equipment loan and resource libraries for the families. The facility also acts as a training site for several post-secondary college and university professional programs, and high school cooperative education experiences.

Whitmore said medical advancements, including neo-intensive care, have saved the lives of many children, and many of these children need specialized schooling or care.

"Those are the children that need the full scope of our services," said Whitmore.

The hallways of the cen-

tre were lined with wheelchairs and special equipment, illustrating the need for the expansion. However, the centre's directors said they were still determining the size and requirements for the expanded facility before announcing a fundraising initiative.

"That will come later...this is the quiet part of the campaign," said director Stephen Payne, who indicated the fundraising campaign will gear up in a few months.

"It is not about a building. It is about taking better care of the children and parents," said Payne, speaking of the needs at the centre.

"Everyone agrees it is a worthwhile endeavour," he



Preschooler Faith Turner hangs up her coat in preparation for her day at the John McGivney Children's Centre. The facility is in need of expansion to best serve children and families in Windsor and Essex County. (Photo provided by JMCC)

said. Ontario's Ministry of Children and Youth Services has earmarked \$8 million towards the centre's expansion, dependent on \$4 million being raised by the community.



Daniel Schwab / Free Press

FEEDING THE NEED – Salvation Army Mjr. Paul Gilbert and food bank operator Barb Cunningham proudly opened the Family Services Food Bank inside the new Salvation Army Thrift Store on Talbot Street last week. The charitable service relocated from its former office at the Salvation Army Essex Citadel Corps and will now be opened Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9 a.m. until noon. The service provides food, clothing and financial support for needy families.

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