

Work to begin on Bampa's House

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CORNING | Many of the people who helped to make Bampa's House possible, along with those who began and have sustained the effort, gathered Thursday at the site on East First Street to celebrate and to look ahead.

"The people who are here right now represent over 70 percent of the funds that have come into Bampa's House," said Joan Wilson, director of the Bampa's House Board of Directors.

The event was similar to a groundbreaking, though the vast majority of the construction to be done at the site will be interior -- a blessing, since work can carry through the winter months.

The Bampa's House foundation, which was started after the 2016 death of Jim "Bampa" Dugan, closed on the property last week.

The non-profit made a deal to purchase the property at 170 E. First St., a circa-1900 Queen Anne Eastlake style home that was previously used as office space by the old Corning Hospital, from Guthrie.

The next step will be interior demolition at the property, set to begin in about two weeks by contractor Croft Construction.

"There is quite a bit of demolition involved," Wilson said. "(And) we have to put in all new wiring, and new (heating) and air conditioning, both downstairs and upstairs, so our residents can have controls in their rooms."

Despite the work ahead, foundation organizers are excited, and proud, that the project that will bear Bampa's name has come this far.

Charlotte Dugan, Jim Dugan's wife, said it was the frustration of the last week of her husband's life, spent in a nursing home, that made the creation of a comfort care home in his name so important.

"I was with him 24/7 for seven days," she said. "There was no place for me to lay down, so I either sat in a chair or put my head on the bed. I had to do all of his medicines, he never once got a bath, and I'd have to run after a nurse every time it was time for his medicine."

"Nursing homes are good places, but they're institutionalized -- it's not like being in a home," Wilson said. "In Jim's last week, the room was so small our family couldn't even fit in it. Lights were flashing, buzzers were going off, people were rushing to help, but they didn't always come (when Jim needed help). It's just the nature of a nursing home right now."

"After he passed away, they got talking about this and Joan just took the ball and started running with it," Charlotte Dugan said. "My son (Patrick Dugan) is the vice president of the foundation, my daughter (Cory Dugan) is the secretary of the foundation, and their friend Patrick Dubendorfer is also on the board, along with Joe Carey (of Carey's Brewhouse), who was one of Jim's best friends."

She said her husband, who was "a very humble person," would have loved the idea, but maybe not with his name attached to it.

Mayor Bill Boland, who attended the event Thursday, gave the project perhaps the strongest praise.

"I was going up the stairs, and I thought, 'Yeah, this is where I'd like to come,'" he said.

The facility, when it opens, will be operated by volunteers with the assistance of CareFirst. It will be free to those who need it, and family and friends will be welcome to visit at any time of day or night.

Wilson said Bampa's House will be one of approximately 30 comfort care homes currently operating in New York state, a number that is growing.

Donors to the foundation include the Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes, the Corning Inc. Foundation, Lions International and the Corning Lions, CareFirst, Jim Flaws and Marcia Weber, Dresser-Rand, Tom and Beth Tranter, Corning Enterprises, Pierri's Central Restaurant, Simmons-Rockwell and the Wiffleball Association of Painted Post, among many others. A full list is online at <https://bampashouse.org/donor-recognition/>.



▲ HIDE CAPTION

Bampa's House benefactors pose Thursday outside Bampa's House, located at 170 E. First St. in Corning. [SHAWN VARGO/THE LEADER]



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Charlotte Dugan, right, wife of Jim "Bampa" Dugan, gives a tour Thursday of the First Street home that will become Bampa's House. [SHAWN VARGO/THE LEADER]