

Safe Harbor and OnPoint welcome community to their open houses

By Gari Voss

Safe Harbor Celebrates New Facility

The road has been long and sometimes bumpy for the Board of Safe Harbor Children's Advocacy Center, but the Executive Director Lori Antkoviak and staff welcomed the public with smiles and many thanks on Tuesday, April 11, 2023.

The staff began transitioning from their location on Trowbridge Street in March which allowed visitors to see how the open space has enabled care providers to better serve children who suffer from abuse and neglect. Activities that were once housed in a single room now can have their own spaces. There is an updated examination room, forensic interview area, therapy rooms and



During the Grand Opening for Safe Harbor at its new location on Sherman St., Executive Director Lori Antkoviak explains to Brad Van Melle, who represented Lakewood Construction, how each group such as Lakewood Construction would have a wooden pinwheel erected along the Pinwheel Path that children will follow as they come to Safe Harbor. Antkoviak stressed that they could not do their work with children without the continuing support of the many sponsors that provide monetary support.

meeting space. The 5,800 sq. ft. facility is open and welcoming to children who have been

traumatized. To negate the fears already associated with abuse and neglect, interviews can be conduct-

ed by a staff member in a comfortable environment while law enforcement, child protective services



State Representatives Matt Hall and Rachele Smit sent their congratulations and best wishes for the continuing services that Safe Harbor provide in Allegan County.

and/or court appointed representatives observe from another room.

Having the open house in April was significant since April is designated as Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month. The new facility will allow the staff to continue offering services to children affected by physical or sexual abuse and neglect for another 40+ years.

The proceedings were followed by the planting of pinwheels on the "lawn". Each pinwheel signifies hope and a happy life that children can learn to have even after trauma if they receive the proper care and support.

OnPoint Prepares for Move
Monday, April 17, 2023

marked the beginning of a new era for Allegan County's mental health services. Previously known as Allegan County Community Mental Health, the agency began transforming the agency's culture into OnPoint even before the name change in 2022 and services expanded across Allegan County.

The agency is now able to help a wider range of needs and the new facility will enable staff to focus on being more welcoming in helping individuals return to productive lives. As explained during the introductions, the building was designed to bring natural light into all areas. And natural light has healing effect in itself.

After welcoming the
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gathering, Executive Director Mark Witte thanked architects who assisted in locating and designing the

previous retail store into a wonderful work space, construction leaders who guided crews through the pandem-

ic, state and federal leaders who assisted with funding, and the OnPoint staff that has continued providing ser-

vices throughout the many planning and construction phases. During the Open House,

visitors toured the new halls and rooms on Jenner Dr. (M-40 South) and learned more about the services

OnPoint is currently offering and plans to expand in the future.

The county agency has been instrumental in providing mental health or developmental disability services, substance use disorder treatment, and housing services. The staff strives to be "people-centered and family-focused" as services assist with developing coping skills for those with mental illnesses, developmental or intellectual disabilities, substance abuse disorders or homelessness.

It is anticipated that the move from their Dumont Lake offices will be completed by May 8, 2023. In the meanwhile, thanks to several grants and additional funding, programs are already being offered to assist in reaching goals to provided extended services to Allegan County residents.



Executive Director Mark Witte, far left, led state representatives, county leaders, facility contractor representative, OnPoint Board member and staff in the Ribbon Cutting of OnPoint's new facility, Monday, April 17, 2023. The Open House allowed community members and leaders to explore the facility and speak with staff who will be providing services from the Jenner Street location beginning May 8, 2023.