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- By TIM JOHNSON, Staff Writer
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Staff photo/Josh White - Pam Neely, left, and Juanita DeLong, listen as Ramona Arthur, corps officer with The Salvation Army, explains the proposed design of the building's welcome center near the main entrance after a dedication ceremony on the Charles E. Lakin Human Services Campus Wednesday afternoon.



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Staff photo/Josh White - Fred Schott, President and CEO of Boys and Girls Clubs of the Midlands, center,

describes the layout of the organization's new building to Nancy Benson, daughter of Charles E. Lakin, and Bill Kilzer, after Wednesday afternoon's dedication ceremony at the Charles E. Lakin Human Services Campus.

Staff photo/Josh White - Founder Charles E. Lakin cuts the ribbon as his wife, Flo, and their four children join him during Wednesday afternoon's dedication ceremony at the Charles E. Lakin Human Services Campus.

Staff photo/Josh White - Charles E. Lakin thanks all of the individuals and organizations involved in the planning and creation of the human services campus named in his honor during a dedication ceremony Wednesday afternoon.

Staff photo/Josh White - Local residents look on as a member of the United States Air Force Honor Guard prepares to present Charles E. Lakin with an honorary American flag during Wednesday afternoon's dedication ceremony at the human service campus named after Lakin in his honor.

By TIM JOHNSON, Staff Writer

"Isn't it beautiful?" Charles Lakin asked a crowd of hundreds during a dedication ceremony Wednesday as he surveyed the campus he founded.

The Charles E. Lakin Human Services Campus at North 16th Street and Avenue G includes Heartland Homes, a permanent supportive housing facility operated by Heartland Family Service; the MICAH House emergency family shelter; the Heartland Family Service office building; the American Red Cross-Loess Hills Chapter; and a building shared by The Salvation Army and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Council Bluffs. Heartland Homes, the MICAH House and the Heartland Family Service office building have already opened, said Nancy Schulze, vice president of Iowa professional services for HFS. The Red Cross building is expected to open Monday. The Salvation Army-Boys & Girls Club building won't be completely open until January.

"We'll kind of do a preliminary opening in December and a full opening in January," said Capt. Joel Arthur, co-pastor of The Salvation Army of Council Bluffs.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Council Bluffs is tentatively planning on a Jan. 25 grand opening, said Kelly Sears, executive director.

"Today is a celebration for us - a celebration of the realization of a vision, a vision 2 1/2 years in the making, a vision that will help thousands of children," said Pete Tulipana, CEO of HFS and leader of the five-agency cabinet.

"Growing up in rural Iowa, I never dreamed of the day when I would do something like this," Lakin said. Lakin, his wife, Florence, and their four children, Chuck of Omaha, Diane of Denver, Debbie of Oregon and Nancy of Virginia all participated in the event.

"Seeing the day finally come and watching the family-friendly campus come to fruition is a very proud day for us," he said.

The campus should make services more convenient for those who need them, Lakin said.

"It allows people easy access to five wonderful agencies, all within walking distance," he said. "This would not have been possible without the Iowa West Foundation, a major contributor. The project could not have come to fruition without Pete.

"Larry Hopp, with 200 men under him, oversaw the complete building of everything," Lakin said. "He said this has been the year with the worst rain and mud that he's ever seen. In spite of that, he got the project

done on time and within the approved budget."

Said Tulipana, "Larry Hopp and Kiewit Building Group were phenomenal. They were patient and went out of their way to make things the way we wanted them."

"I can't believe how fast it all came together," said Deborah O'Donnell Neary, former executive director of the American Red Cross-Loess Hills Chapter, who stayed involved in the project after going to the organization's Heartland Chapter and helped put the dedication together.

Lakin also said he didn't think it would come together so fast. He remembered a comment he made when he was talking to foundation and agency officials about the concept.

"I told them 'I probably won't be alive when it's done,' and they said, 'Yes, you will.'"

The Lakin family donated \$10 million for construction and an additional \$2 million in property for the campus. The Iowa West Foundation funded a feasibility study that solidified the campus concept and gave a total of \$8 million to the project. In addition, Iowa West officials helped facilitate a discussion among the organizations about a shared campus. Graham believes that concept will likely become a model for communities across the nation.

"The mission of the Iowa West Foundation is to improve lives and strengthen communities for future generations," Graham said Todd Graham, CEO of the Iowa West Foundation. "On behalf of the Iowa West Board, I'm pleased to say this much more than meets the foundation's mission. This project will improve the quality of life in our community now and for many generations."

The five agencies have ordered a photo book for Lakin that shows different phases of development. On Wednesday, they presented him and Graham each with a replica of the Donor's Circle pillar.

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