

# PRESS RELEASE

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of Jackson County

## **Collaboration Center for Community Non-profits taking shape Former MESC / Social Security offices to house downtown center**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Jackson, Michigan, March 2, 2007 – In just a few weeks, the United Way of Jackson County will relocate its offices to former the MESC/Social Security office building, 536 North Jackson Street. The building is just south of the Jackson County fairgrounds and near the Armory Arts project.

The property is under development with the goal of providing a “one stop shop” for community services and support organizations. The United Way of Jackson County will become the first tenant in the center. Shortly afterwards, PDH/CRC (Potential Development Homes / Community Respite Center) will move in next door.

“We’re very excited that after several years of planning and preparation, our vision of a community non-profit center is about to become a reality”, said Mike Shore, Vice President of Consumers Energy and President of the United Way of Jackson County Board of Directors. “This is an important step toward building a stronger, more efficient non-profit support system.”

The center promises to offer benefits to the community by providing non-profit organizations opportunities to reduce costs, while increasing collaboration, cooperation and sharing of information.

“A community non-profit center makes good sense”, said Shelly Saines, President & CEO of The Jackson County Community Foundation. “Nonprofit organizations can do a better job of serving Jackson County residents in need by sharing resources and working together to provide better solutions.”

Barb Freysinger, Executive Director of PDH / CRC, a merger of Potential Development Homes and the Community Respite Center, will be joining the non-profit campus shortly. “The timing of this is perfect for us”, said Freysinger. “We have outgrown our space...we currently have two or three employees in every office. Becoming a part of the center will really help us serve our clients more effectively.”

Many organizations and individuals are volunteering their time and resources to bring the vision of a non-profit center to reality. “This whole project is possible because of the generous donations and support from the community”, said Ken Toll, Executive Director of the United Way of Jackson County. “We want to thank everyone who is helping out with the project...and the list is growing daily.”

Overall design for the center is being provided by retired Jackson architect David M. Fleming, while construction management services are being donated by Mike Sharp and Andy Soltis of Sharp and Soltis, LLC. Consumers Energy is assisting with telecommunications and information technology. Office furniture and additional layout and design services are being donated by DBI Business Interiors, while construction and building materials are being provided by Shively-Bouma, Inc and numerous other suppliers.

Jackson County’s unions have generously provided the workforce and skilled trades necessary to refurbish the site. Labor is being donated by several organizations, including the International Association of Machinists Local 435, Carpenters and Joiners Local 1004, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 252, and Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 333.

All contributors will be recognized at a community open house ceremony this summer. Anyone interested in donating services or materials can contact Ken Toll or Mike Shore at the United Way of Jackson County, 784-0511.

United Way is leasing the building with an option to renew or purchase it along with adjoining properties that would create the nonprofit campus. At full capacity, the non-profit center could house as many as 10 –15 area non-profits in three buildings encompassing over 30,000 square feet.