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The Oasis Project opens new learning center at Cushing

Volunteer teachers will offer free tutoring to students

By Rebecca Seymour

Jan Frans admits she has always been a dreamer. What sets the Village of Wales resident apart is her knack for turning her aspirations into reality.

Relying on her faith, the ability to collaborate with others and an unquenchable quest to give back to her community, the retired middle school teacher has spearheaded a new venture called The Oasis Project.

“For eight years I have been dreaming about an out-of-the-box idea that would serve the unmet needs of the community. I didn’t want to get to the end of my life and wonder if I could have pulled this off. So, I decided I needed to really try and go for it,” said Frans.

What started as a dream became a serious exploration in the fall of 2014 to determine community needs and resources to make The Oasis Project a reality. The purpose of the movement is to organize volunteers from the community to work together to help fill the gaps where people are in need.

Frans and her team of fellow visionaries sought advice from mentors in local churches, businesses, school districts, financial advisors and community leaders as they nurtured their ideas to create a multi-faceted program to serve various needs in the Lake Country community.

“We also visited a variety of nonprofit organizations in Waukesha and Milwaukee where they were already successfully meeting a need that wasn’t being met,” added Frans.

According to the group’s website, “The Oasis Project is a nonprofit network and partnership of faith-based and community-based volunteers, who are committed to serving the needs of those in Lake Country, giving them a future and a hope.”

Goals for The Oasis Project include offering free tutoring through the Oasis Learning Center for students needing extra academic support who might not be able to otherwise be afforded it, and eventually implementing a counseling center offering affordable services, a center for youth to connect with peers in a safe and fun environment and a community hub for adult life-long learners seeking resources, group discussions and seminars.

“To stand up and say, ‘We can do this together,’ – that is my passion. Sometimes I feel like I am building the airplane while I’m flying it. But in my heart I couldn’t let it go. It’s a God thing and that’s what is motivating me,” explained Frans. “I think The Oasis Project can really make a big dent in making people’s lives better.”

Oasis learning center

Based on the input from other similar models in the greater Milwaukee area and on the advice from ministry and business consultants, the group agreed to start small, implementing the vision in doable increments.

Through a community-school partnership, The Oasis Learning Center will open on September 21 at Cushing Elementary School in Delafield. The center will serve 20-30 students needing extra support in order to be academically successful.

“Jan reached out to our school district superintendent, Pat Deklotz with ideas on how to provide services for some of our students who are in need of tutoring and adult mentoring. We really connected with this vision of learning without boundaries and going beyond the school walls by inviting community members to come in to provide these services for our students,” said Rebecca Toetz, principal at Cushing Elementary School.

Fifteen current and retired licensed teaching professionals will volunteer their time to work with the students, offering free tutoring during lunch and also after school.

“These teachers have really inspired me. They have stepped up to be a part of this project because they love helping kids and are looking forward to building relationships with them,” said Frans. “If we are successful at Cushing, our goal is to offer our services to any school that wants us.”

For more information about The Oasis Project, visit www.oasisprojectwi.org.