

OAK LEAVES

OAK PARK

SUBURBS

Oak Park and River Forest Infant Welfare Society launches work on 10,000-square-foot building

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The Oak Park River Forest Infant Welfare Society recently hosted a "groundbreaking" event for its new building. The fundraising campaign for it was dubbed "Achieve the Dream," so many children who use the group's services showed up dressed as wizards and fairy princesses and were given wands to wave. - Original Credit: OPRF Infant Welfare Society (OPRF Infant Welfare Society / HANDOUT)

Work to renovate what will be the new home of the Oak Park River Forest Infant Welfare Society was scheduled to begin Tuesday.

The 10,000-square-foot building, a former U.S. Bank location at 28 W. Madison in Oak Park, was purchased by the group in 2019 for \$725,000. Since that time, the group put together a fundraising effort dubbed the “Achieve The Dream” campaign for extensive remodeling, according to spokesperson Margaret LaFleur.

While the Oak Park River Forest Infant Welfare Society has existed for more than a century, up until recently the organization always rented its space, currently located at 320 Lake Street. The society serves low-income children, mostly from a five-mile radius, and also provides maternal health care.

Once renovations, estimated at \$3.8 million, are complete in February 2022, the Madison Street building will house a dental, medical and community health services facility as well as offices for the society. Additionally, the building has extra space for programming, LaFleur said.

“We won’t have to pay rent, we’ll have a large parking lot, we have room for growth and it’s a good location for the patients we serve,” LaFleur said, explaining the advantages of owning versus renting.

“We bought the building completely through philanthropy and all the renovations will be done through philanthropy,” LaFleur said.



State Sen. Don Harmon spoke at the Oak Park Infant Welfare Society's recent "groundbreaking" event for its new 10,000 square foot building. - Original Credit: OPRF Infant Welfare Society (OPRF Infant Welfare Society / HANDOUT)

The group bought the building in January 2019 and wanted to begin renovations at that time, but construction was put on hold because of the pandemic and the need for additional fundraising, LaFleur said.

With plans in place for Walsh Construction to start renovations July 6, the society two weeks ago hosted a “groundbreaking” ceremony to celebrate. Speakers that day included Illinois Senate President Don Harmon and Oak Park Village President Vicki Scaman. Because of the fundraising campaign’s “Achieve the Dream” theme, many children who use the group’s services showed up dressed as wizards and fairy princesses and were given wands to wave.

“It was really very sweet that they came out,” LaFleur said.



Supporters of the Oak Park River Forest Infant Welfare Society participated in a "groundbreaking" ceremony for the nonprofit's new 10,000-square-foot building on Madison in Oak Park. - Original Credit: OPRF Infant Welfare Society (OPRF Infant Welfare Society / HANDOUT)