

NORTHSIDE CHRONICLE

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2006

Sarah Heinz House Takes Boys and Girls Club to a New Level With Massive New Addition

By Dan Richey



Sarah Heinz House is on a journey that began 105 years ago, according to Stanley Pittman, executive director of the organization.

That journey will take its next step in 2007 – hopefully in January or February, said Director of Development and Public Relations Mary Jo Meenen – when Sarah Heinz House will complete its Building Character Campaign and become the largest single-unit Boys and Girls Club in America. The campaign is the driving force behind the \$11.3 million construction of a state-of-the-art, 36,000 square-foot building on the Heinz House grounds at 16th Street and East Ohio Street, to complement its existing 45,000

square-foot building.

The reasons for the expansion, Pittman said, are the increasingly overwhelming demand for Heinz House programs and services and the organization's desire to do all it can to serve the community. In its current form, Sarah Heinz House serves kids ages 6-18 from 98 percent of whom are from families living below the poverty line – those who rely on Heinz House's resources the most.

The organization offers a myriad of programs for local youths, including "gym-swim" recreation, gymnastics, basketball and soccer leagues, karate, art workshops and robotics classes. These programs complement Heinz House's core "club" program,

which provides field trips, courses for building life skills, and college preparation classes. Many of these programs have received national recognition.

Pittman expressed particular pride in the pan of the curriculum.

"We have 11 dance classes – tap, ballet and... what's the new dance?" he asked.

"Hip-hop," Meenen said.

With so many programs attracting more interest than they could support, Heinz House needed to expand.

"We were grossly over capacity," Pittman said.

"We had to ask ourselves: Are we happy to remain status quo, or do we want to be able to reach out to more youths?"

The new facilities will allow Heinz House not only to improve the programs that exist, but also to expand its services and include more young people. The organization's leaders estimate that the extra space and resources will allow them to eventually enroll as many as 400 new people – a 50 percent increase to the 800 children and young adults who already participate in programs at the Heinz House. The expanded facilities will include a bigger, regulation-size swimming pool fit for competitions, a modern fitness center five times the size of its predecessor, a designated dance studio and a new gym.

Activity tends to make young people rather hungry and they will

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be well fed thanks to the addition of a light commercial-grade kitchen equipped for banquets, full meals and job training programs.

The new building will not forsake environmental concern for functionality. It is considered a “green” project and is scheduled to receive a silver certification from Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. Resource

efficiency, which reduces both environmental waste and operational costs, has been a major consideration. As a result, the building will consume 35 percent less energy and use 20 percent less water. Through the aggressive utilization of natural lighting, which will illuminate 75 percent of the most commonly used areas of the building,

Heinz House will greatly reduce energy waste. Lights will also be equipped with motion sensors that allow them to shut off automatically when a room is not occupied.

Of the total amount needed to complete the project, Sarah Heinz House has already raised \$7.1 million, \$6.9 million of which has been donated by various foundations and corporations.