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ReSource kicks off capital campaign

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BARRE — A capital campaign that will finance the planned restoration of a late-19th century granite shed that has become home to an environmentally friendly and socially responsible community-based nonprofit organization has officially entered a key phase.

During a Monday morning news conference, Tom Longstreth, executive director of ReSource, said the organization still needs to raise roughly \$600,000 to hit its \$1.75 million fund-raising target and complete its vision of transforming a massive building that has been a work-in-progress since it was acquired with the help of a sizable state grant more than two years ago.

Though ReSource has raised nearly \$900,000 in grants, donations and pledges and is banking on another \$260,000 in historic tax credits, Longstreth said the organization, which took its quiet campaign public on Monday, still has work to do on the financial front.

Joined by state and local dignitaries who spoke about the value of programs — from job training to reuse — that are operated under the ReSource umbrella, Longstreth said the organization's plans for the exterior of a building, which had housed a parade of granite businesses dating all the way back to 1898, will depend on donations that have not yet been received.

With interior renovations nearly complete, a new insulated concrete floor and bio mass pellet boiler in place, Longstreth said a second phase of work will include largely aesthetic improvements that will restore the façade of the former granite plant, while replacing its roof.

"We will restore its historic appearance, peel away the vinyl siding that now hides its historic windows, and allow it to once again become the center of productive activities that creates jobs, fulfills dreams and creates possibilities," he said.

To a large extent, Longstreth and others said that already is happening in the building that has become a clearinghouse for all things reusable and a training center for at-risk youngsters, like those enrolled in ReSource's "YouthBuild" program.

The latest crop of YouthBuild participants were on hand for Monday's news conference and several described the program as a life-altering experience.

Allen Michael Deblois was one of them.

Deblois, who joined the program last November, said he has managed to repair once-strained relationships by improving his behavior, embracing the life skills he is learning, and actively volunteering in the community.

"It's been a big help for me," said Deblois, who proudly offered a tour of a building that has been renovated with the help of he and other YouthBuild participants.

Annie Noonan, commissioner of the state Department of Labor, said the YouthBuild program was providing a valuable service particularly in an economy when jobs are tight and people are struggling.

"A program like this that will take unemployed Vermonters and youth in Vermont and give them a transferable, saleable skill is ... critically important," she said.

Barre Mayor Thomas Lauzon agreed, praising ReSource for salvaging more than just used, but still usable items that would otherwise end up in a landfill.

"They (ReSource) are not only recycling ... building capital, but also human capital," he said, singling out participants of the YouthBuild program as examples of an investment that has and will continue to pay off.

Longstreth reminded those in attendance that the project was the product of a merger between ReSource — then ReCycle North in Burlington — and the Montpelier-based ReStore after the latter organization found itself instantly homeless three years ago.

"The impetus of this project was a collapsed roof and the impending loss of a small but important part of the central Vermont community," he said, recounting the event that set the stage for an eventual merger.

"It became apparent we could deliver the greatest value by joining forces," he said.

That has since happened and Longstreth said ReSource is eager to begin work on the second phase of a downtown redevelopment project that has cleaned up a Barre "brownfield" and used state-of-the-art technologies to make a once drafty old granite shed energy efficient.

"We're excited to have the history of this facility become part of our history," he said.

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