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Home of the Innocents coming to New Albany's Cardinal Ritter House
By KATY GOODMAN

It's a question that has plagued the Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation for some time, "What will you do with the house once it's ready?" Now, that question has an answer. It has been announced that the Home of the Innocents will be the first tenants of New Albany's Cardinal Ritter House.

The announcement was made at a fundraising event held Sunday night at the River City Winery. Immediately after the announcement, there were quiet exclamations of excitement and a round of applause.

"We are thrilled to have Home of the Innocents as our first tenants," said Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation member and State Rep. Ed Clere. Having a tenant, "puts a face on the project," he said. "The programming Home of the Innocents will provide from Cardinal Ritter House personifies Cardinal Ritter's legacy. That has always been our focus, to create and provide for space for nonprofits that further the life and legacy of Cardinal Ritter."

The Home of the Innocents, which hopes to have some programs operating from the Ritter House in early 2010, will initially begin with three programs, explained CEO Gordon Brown. There will be Therapeutic Loving foster Care, which trains parents to meet the needs of foster children, community-based services that help to stabilize families and a program already in place in Floyd County schools that works with kids with autism.

Brown said that the Home of the Innocents had been looking for a location in Southern Indiana for about a year before getting in touch with the Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation.

"We needed a place that was convenient, near the downtown area of New Albany, Clarksville or Jeffersonville," Brown said, "and it needed to be within our financial needs."

Clere said the Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation would be able to provide very affordably leased space for a nonprofit. The objective was not to make money, but to provide the place for nonprofits.

As the first tenants, Brown said that the Home of the Innocents would be able to "help make sure Cardinal Ritter House is stabilized and put to good use."

David Hock, Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation Board Chair, said that having Home of the Innocents as the new tenant means everything.

"Not everyone will have that same kind of hands-on outreach," he added. "We couldn't have done any better."

Floyd County Historian David Barksdale echoed the comment, calling Home of the Innocents "a wonderful tenant."

Carl Malysz, Deputy Mayor of New Albany, said it's an exciting, wonderful opportunity for the city.

"We ought to be really excited they have confidence in Southern Indiana, the City of New Albany and the Cardinal Ritter Foundation," Malysz said.

"It's exciting to be moving to this next phase," said Clere, "it's been a long time coming."

But, he said, the Foundation has a lot of momentum, and the announcement has given them new momentum and "a new purpose."