

The Capital

South County

Cedarhurst begins work rebuilding community house

By RODNEY CALVER, For The Capital

A new era in Cedarhurst on the Bay began Sunday with groundbreaking for a 3,000-square-foot community house.

The original, built in 1929, was extensively damaged when Tropical Storm Isabel lashed the bay region two years ago this week.

"Initially, we thought that the building could be repaired," said Cedarhurst Citizens Association President Jo Anne Groves. "But when this was not possible we decided to obtain a loan and rebuild on the site of the old house."

The \$300,000 project includes repairs to the harbor and community pier, also damaged in the storm.

The night Isabel hit, Harbormaster Ed McAllister and other residents of the Shady Side community saw the wind begin to lift the roof off the community house.

"We tried to secure it," he said. "But it was too dangerous and we had to retreat and survey the damage at dawn."

Mr. McAllister said there was no way of saving the original structure but the association vowed to replace or repair its "three gems:" the house, the harbor and the pier. In March, crew members from *USS Maryland* helped with reconstruction of the pier, which included heavier gauge pilings and more bolts. The easiest part was the harbor, which just needed to be cleared of storm debris.

Scott Mattson, former association president, tried to get help from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the state and county.

"But when that did not work, he approached local bankers to secure a loan," added Mr. McAllister.

A plan and artist's impression of the new community house, designed by architect Kent Abraham, was on show at Sunday's event. It's hoped the two-story building will be completed by next spring.

The building will feature a gathering room for 282 people, a kitchen and bathrooms. It will be used for community functions and meetings.

"It will also allow us to conduct projects with children that we have been putting off for some time," said Ms. Groves. The community will repay the loan through revenues raised through a special tax on the

300 property owners.

Bea Poulin, community specialist for south county, was also at Sunday's ceremony.

"This community has a heart of gold," she said. "There was a lot of devastation but people, many of limited budgets, looked out for each other and pulled together as a community."

Ms. Groves was helped at the groundbreaking ceremony by Community House Committee members Sandy Herndon, Chet Higdon, John Petro, Cathy Macco and Gary Beckett.

"It's taken a lot of hard work to get to this point," said Mr. Beckett.

Residents took time out from their fun day to remember the victims of Hurricane Katrina and the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

"I hope that somehow this message of hope will get down to the people on the Gulf Coast," said Mr. McAllister. "We did not suffer damage at that level, but look where we have come in two years."

Rodney Calver is a freelance writer in Galesville.

Published September 13, 2005, The Capital, Annapolis, Md.

Copyright © 2005 The Capital, Annapolis, Md.