



## New Hope for the young Medical pavilion is institute's next step

By BRUCE RUSHTON  
STAFF WRITER

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Joseph Nyre stood in front of the student body at the Hope School Learning Center gymnasium and belted it out. "We are!" shouted the president of The Hope Institute for Children and Families, a nonprofit organization that provides health care, residential facilities and classes for youngsters with developmental and multiple disabilities.

"BULLDOGS!" students screamed back en masse.

Some kids flailed their arms. Others sat mute. A few rocked back and forth in their chairs, keeping time with pump-'em-up tunes more commonly heard during timeouts at NBA games than at a school that has been helping physically and mentally challenged kids make their way in the world since 1957.

Friday marked the Springfield school's first pep rally ever, and more changes are afoot. The Hope Institute For Children and Families, which provides health services and a place to live in addition to classrooms, is about to grow.

The institute this week announced that it had chosen Siciliano Inc. as general contractor to renovate a medical office building at 5220 S. Sixth St. that was once operated by the now-defunct Doctors Hospital.

The renovation, estimated to cost about \$500,000, is expected to be finished this spring.

Once complete, the building, to be called the Noll Medical Pavilion, will house a variety of health-care services for children with developmental disabilities and mental illnesses. Besides moving services for autistic children to the new building from its campus near Lake Springfield, The Hope Institute for Children and Families plans to lease space to other service providers at below-market rates. Memorial Health System's Mental Health Centers of Central Illinois and Southern Illinois University School of Medicine's child psychiatry department are expected to take up residence.

No family will be turned away due to inability to pay, the Hope Institute promises. If families can't pay, the institute expects to get funding from Medicaid or grants from the public or private sectors. Families with autistic children from as far away as St. Louis are expected to come to Springfield to receive services at the new building.

On Friday, though, all thoughts were on basketball and cheerleaders, who wore shorts and T-shirts.

Students chose a bulldog for the school's mascot in an election, and the school colors are

now officially blue and white. Coincidentally or otherwise, that's the same mascot and colors claimed by Yale University, rival to Harvard University, where Nyre studied. But Nyre hasn't forgotten his collegiate allegiances

"The (institute's) Web site is crimson," he pointed out.

The Hope team includes two girls, one of whom is considered one of the team's best players. Besides learning how to handle a basketball, team members grow accustomed to seemingly simple things like making eye contact with others.

Coach Tim Huseman, former basketball coach at Sacred Heart-Griffin and a member of a Quincy High School squad that won the 1981 state championship, said coaching Hope students is a matter of repetition, just like with any other players. Their demeanor before Friday's pep rally, where they did lay-up drills in front of the whole school, reminded him of his own teammates in high school.

"They all had the same look in their eyes: We're ready, coach," Huseman said.

The school's 10-member team will compete for the first time today at a Special Olympics event in Chatham, marking the first time in about a decade that Hope students have participated in Special Olympics. They will not play as a team; rather, individuals will compete in skills contests to see who is the best dribbler, passer and shooter.

But one 14-year-old team member (call him Jim — the Hope staff said his name could not be published due to privacy concerns) said he won't be competing as an individual.

"I'm going to do good — I can feel it in my heart," Jim said. "Not for myself.

"For the Bulldogs."

Bruce Rushton can be reached at 788-1542.

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## Hope for the future

The Hope Institute for Children and Families expects to open an outpatient medical center for children with autism and other disabilities this spring.

\*The Name: The building near St. John's Hospital will be called the Noll Medical Pavilion to honor Bob and Patricia Noll, both deceased. The Nolls lived in California, never visited Springfield and never had children of their own, but were longtime donors to the Hope Institute. Their foundation is contributing \$1 million to help pay for the project.

\*The Cost: The institute paid \$4.5 million for the building that was owned by St. John's Hospital. The state helped secure a \$3.5 million low-interest loan from Chase Bank.

\*The Students: About 120 young people as old as 20 with various disabilities attend school at the Hope Learning Center. Half live on the institute's campus and the other half live in 10 homes in the community.

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