



An architect's rendering of the renovations planned by Christian Outreach for the former health department building on Grace Street in Smithfield.

Community invited to view Christian Outreach plans

By Diana McFarland
News editor

The public is invited to get a first-hand look at plans for the new Christian Outreach building at 401 Grace St. in Smithfield — and kick-off the organization's community capital campaign.

The former health department building is being remodeled to house Christian Outreach, which provides assistance to needy residents of everything from food to dental care.

The event is Saturday, July 13, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and includes free hot dogs, chips, drinks, popcorn and snowcones, as well as live music by Bria Kelly.

"We want to kick it off for the community and show them what our plans are," said COP President Charlie Seitz.

Renovations include a new hip roof, fixing the heating and air conditioning system, adding walk-in freezers and refrigerators for the food pantry program and other building modifications.

If all goes to plan, Christian Outreach expects to open the new building in early 2014.

Renovations are estimated at \$600,000. So far, Christian Outreach has received a \$100,000 grant from the Obici Healthcare Foundation and a \$100,000 grant from the Hampton Roads Community Foundation. Isle of Wight County is leasing the building to the organization for \$1,387 a year.

To date, Christian Outreach has received about \$205,000 and another \$95,000 in pledges, which includes \$25,000 from the town of Smithfield.

In addition, Christian

Outreach has received about \$205,000 in additional donations, with another \$95,000 in pledges, which includes \$25,000 from the town of Smithfield.

Exterior work is expected to begin in about four weeks and residents will be able to see a "significant difference" to the building by mid-August, Seitz said.

Christian Outreach is currently located in an unheated, unair conditioned building in the county's industrial park off Route 10. The new location at 402 Grace St. is expected to boost volunteer participation and make it easier for those in need, organizers said.

Christian Outreach began in 1991 when a group of churches got together to raise money for those needing help with winter fuel costs. The first fundraiser was Souper Saturday, which continues today and

raises more than \$10,000 toward fuel assistance each year.

COP also manages nine other programs, including the Angel Tree, dental assistance, donated cars, prescription assistance, student assistance, emergency assistance, the food pantry, medical transportation, home repair handicap ramps and helps with the Isle of Wight Count Appointed Special Advocate Program which assists abused and neglected children in the court system.

Those wanting to donate or learn more about Christian Outreach can visit the website at www.iowcop.org. Donations can be made online or by mail to Christian Outreach Program, PO Box 253, Smithfield, VA 23431. All donations are tax deductible and those that donate will receive a receipt.

For more information call 238-9506.