

Nonprofit buys new building for aging center

American Foundation for the Blind to showcase new technologies

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Staff Writer

NORTH DALLAS — The American Foundation for the Blind plans to showcase new technologies that range from talking microwaves to devices that read the instructions on pill bottles in its new National Aging Center.

The AFB bought a 13,735-square-foot building at 11030 Ables Lane for \$500,000, said Judy Scott, the center's director. It plans to spend about \$250,000 in renovations and to open



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the aging center in August, she said.

AFB is moving from 260 Treadway Plaza near the intersection of Mockingbird Lane and Harry Hines Boulevard

INDEPENDENT LIVING:

Judy Scott, left, director for the American Foundation for the Blind in Dallas with Rodger Meier, chairman of AFB's campaign cabinet at AFB's new building.

and establishing the aging center to provide aging baby boomers — and their parents — with resources to deal with diminishing vision. More than 6.5 mil-

lion Americans 55 and older have vision problems, according to AFB. The NAC is one of four such national centers of the AFB. The other three centers are in Atlanta, which focuses on literacy issues; Huntington W.Va., which focuses on technology and employment issues; and San Francisco, which works on employment issues.

AFB is an 83-year-old nonprofit associated with Helen Keller, who after being stricken with blindness and deafness as a young child, overcame overwhelming odds to become a national leader who advocated for the betterment of others, including the blind and deaf. Keller began to work with the AFB in 1924 and served as an ambassador and spokeswoman for the nonprofit until her death in 1968.

“The foundation searched for a year to find a single-story, low-maintenance building with access to public transportation and good parking,” said Larry K. Kimbler, chairman of the NAC board and a national board member of AFB.

To serve a growing number of seniors with irreversible vision loss, the new facility has a resource center and training and demonstration room displaying the latest technology targeting the blind and visually impaired.

Also planned is a 1,600-square-foot apartment fitted with adaptive technology for the visually impaired. The apartment is a national prototype designed to help the vision-impaired live in their own homes.

“If you can't maintain your own lifestyle in your own house because you've lost your vision, you lose your independence,” Kimbler said. “You have to move to assisted living or move in with your children,” he said. “You have to do something that will dramatically impact the quality of your life in a negative way.”

Molly H. Bogen, executive director of The Senior Source, Senior Citizens of Greater Dallas, said the Center's research and cutting-edge technology will be a valuable resource.

Headed by Dallas philanthropist Rodger Meier, AFB's capital campaign has raised \$1 million of the National Aging Center's five-year, \$2.2 million budget. The AFB employs three full-time and three part-time people and relies heavily on volunteers.

Scott said, “We are currently receiving grants from area foundations to secure and renovate the facility.”

AFB has received letters of commitment from The Hillcrest Foundation, The Hoblitzelle Foundation and the George and Fay Young Foundation Inc., but declined to say how much the foundations have committed.

Kimbler said the AFB will occupy 7,000 square feet in the building, tripling its current space. The building's remaining space will be rented to nonprofits, generating an average of \$37,500 in annual revenue for the AFB through 2009, he said.

The AFB was represented by Eliza Solender of Solender/Hall Inc. The seller, The American Association for Respiratory Care, was represented by Greg Miller of Henry S. Miller Cos. Inc.

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