AVON-CANTON ROTARY HELPS FAVARH WITH NEW BUILDING PROJECT

Ken Byron • Hartford Courant • February 22, 2017

Favarh, a nonprofit group that helps people with intellectual and developmental disabilities plans to start work this summer on a new building that is part of a big expansion of its facilities and the services it offers to its 350 clients.

That project is part of a $4 million effort that is expected to create a three-building campus on Commerce Drive for Favarh. The group's headquarters is at 225 Commerce Drive and it recently occupied part of a 12,500 square foot warehouse across the street that it plans to eventually buy.

Up next is constructing a 7,500 square foot building adjacent to the warehouse that will have classrooms and a kitchen to teach Favarh's clients life skills. Favarh received $1.5 million from the state last year for the new building and got another boost on Wednesday when the Avon-Canton Rotary Club announced a $150,000 donation.

Paul Mikkelson, chairman of the Rotary Club's community service committee, said it raises about $50,000 a year to help non-profit groups. The commitment to Favarh will involve raising an additional $30,000 annually, he said.

"We were looking for a major initiative we could do over a five-year period," Mikkelson said. "We talked to other non-profit groups but we knew Favarh is in Canton, it does great work so we said 'Let's work with Favarh.'"

Favarh Director Stephen Morris said the donation announced on Wednesday is the latest and biggest in a long relationship with the Rotary Club.

"The difference here is not just the size of the donation but the scope. It is not just a donation but a commitment to get more involved with us and be a partner in fundraising, " Morris said. He said the new building will be named in the club's honor.

Mikkelson said the club will give Favarh $30,000 annually for the next five years for the building. Fundraisers to help the club include a Taste of the Valley event on April 1 from 7 to 10 p.m. at the Tower Ridge Country Club in Simsbury. Mikkelson said a golf tournament in September will help too and he is organizing a 100-mile bike ride from Avon to Providence, R.I., in April to raise more money as well.

Favarh is also seeking state funding for a 40-unit residential development on Commerce Drive that will include housing for its clients.