

ReMerge program for women looking forward to new OKC home



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This drawing shows the ReMerge building planned for 823 N Villa Ave. in Oklahoma City. [PHOTO PROVIDED]

A comprehensive diversion program for women is getting closer to a new home in central Oklahoma City, with a fundraising effort nearly complete and a groundbreaking ceremony in the memory book.

ReMerge, which helps mothers and pregnant women avoid incarceration through treatment and rehabilitation, has raised roughly \$7.5 million toward a \$9 million capital goal for a 20,000 square-foot building at 823 N Villa Ave.

The nonprofit recently celebrated a groundbreaking for the new facility, which will serve an additional 25 mothers and their families when it opens around next August.

ReMerge has rented space at 1140 N Hudson Ave. The new location places the program near NorthCare — which provides wellness services for Oklahomans with mental illness, addiction and trauma — and other community outreaches.

“It's becoming a campus for several nonprofits,” said Terri Woodland, ReMerge's executive director. “It's kind of exciting. We'll be really close to community partners we work with. We've been relying on community partners to provide programming space for us. We've never had a home of our own. It's amazing. We are grateful for the support of all of our donors in our community.”

ReMerge opened in 2011. Working with the Oklahoma Department of Corrections and the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, along with more than 50 other community partners, the program has produced 114 women graduates and impacted nearly 300 children.

The community outreach program boasts a 70 percent completion rate and just a 5 percent recidivism rate. ReMerge reports that the outreach has saved taxpayers more than \$14 million by keeping the women out of prison.

The new building will include a kitchen, dining area, health and fitness space, a recovery work area, and a dedicated space for education and job training. ReMerge's service capacity will grow from 50 women to 75.

“We are proud to support the incredible work of ReMerge and the women in the program,” said Bob Ross, president and CEO of the Inasmuch Foundation. “We know that children with incarcerated mothers are five times more likely to end up in prison themselves. ReMerge gives these mothers the opportunity to be part of their children's lives and chart a new course for their family's future.”

To learn more about the ReMerge Capital Campaign, visit remergeok.org.