

Hampton Elementary to be repurposed for Arc programs

October 4, 2023 by Mark J. Crawford

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD

Telegraph Editor

STARKE — The Arc of Bradford County has program expansion plans that include the former Hampton Elementary School.

Superintendent Will Hartley said Arc Executive Director John Williams approached the district several months ago about the possibility of purchasing the Hampton school property, but they decided a lease was the better alternative.

Arc supports those with intellectual and developmental disabilities with a variety of programs that promote skill development and independent living. There is the day program as well as residential facilities, and programming that helps their clients engage with the community and obtain employment. Some work in Arc's woodshop providing products for businesses including stakes, pallets and picnic tables.

According to Williams, it is the day program that will be moving to Hampton over the next few months.

"Right now, we serve about 50 individuals in our life skill development program, and so that particular program is going to be moving over to Hampton Elementary," he said. "Our current location where we're at now, that's going to become more of a business center. So we will continue to operate our woodshop and our administrative officers from that site, but most of our programming is going to move over to the Hampton site."

The Arc provides transportation to many of its clients, and that will continue when those programs move to Hampton. They will be taken to the program site and returned home, just as they are now.

Williams took over as the Arc of Bradford's new executive director last year when Sherry Ruskowski retired after serving in that role for 17 years. Williams worked previously at the Arc of Putnam County for more than 10 years.

He explained the life skills development provided through the day program.

"We have computer time, or arts and crafts time, community outings, teaching skills on how to get access to everything that a community may have to offer," he said. The school campus will provide opportunities to expand these offerings, which Williams finds exciting.

"We'll have a computer lab set up. We're going to have a sensory room set up. We're going to have a lot more activities that we're going to be able to offer just because there's going to be more space for us to kind of expand," he said.

Set up will begin taking place throughout this month with a fall festival planned at the campus on Nov. 4. This will include the annual Cow Patty Bingo fundraiser. Then on Nov. 6, there will be a soft opening for program participants. A grand opening for the community will be planned for January.

"We're excited about the next year. We're getting ready to celebrate our 50th anniversary at the Arc of Bradford County, and so over the next year, we're going to be doing a lot of community engagement and connecting with partners," Williams said.

The Arc's first program day in Bradford County was in January 1975.

"We're really excited about our 50th anniversary coming and this partnership with the Bradford County School Board and their staff. We just feel like this is a great partnership, and we're excited to be working with them."

Using the Hampton school site for another purpose also removes those unused student stations from the district's overall total, which helps supports the district's future goal of obtaining funding for a new junior/senior high school. The district is also reducing overhead costs by no longer providing insurance coverage, maintenance, etc.

"It's just a good partnership for both groups," Hartley said. "We obviously don't like holding a property that somebody's not in that's just going to sit there and deteriorate. ... I know myself and all the board members were ecstatic when the Arc came to us about possibly leasing it, because they're just such a great organization."

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