



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Watertown Urban Mission Capital Project Underway with Ceremonial Start**

Renovations to 247 Factory Street Facility Beginning in the Impossible Dream Thrift Store, Food Pantry Store, Pantry to Remain Open in Smaller Space, Programs and Administration Moving to McCarthy Hall

WATERTOWN (March 13, 2014) – Exactly one year from the day the Watertown Urban Mission announced its first ever capital campaign to the public, campaign leadership celebrated the start of construction with the swing of a hammer.

“It has been an incredible year,” said Rev. Fred Garry, campaign committee co-chair with his wife Kathy, and John and Mary Jo Deans. “When we announced this campaign to the public a year ago with just about 57 percent of our goal, the response to put us over the top was swift and today we get to kick off the much needed renovations that will help ensure the long term stability and sustainability of the Mission for many years to come.”

The Watertown Urban Mission’s campaign, known as “Mission: Possible – Renew, Restore, Revitalize,” set a goal of reaching the \$2 million mark by the end of 2014, but exceeded that number in January with the announcement of a gift of about \$200,000 for renovations to the Mission’s Food Pantry from Knorr Bremse Global Care, the parent company of New York Air Brake. The proposed renovations to be funded by the campaign will make the organization’s facilities safer, more efficient and better suited to serve thousands of families in need.

“The response from this community to this important campaign has been wonderful,” said Mr. Deans, campaign co-chair. “We had the wonderful support of some amazing community leaders who gave their time, talent and effort to reach into the community and raise the funds for this project ahead of schedule. A year ago, I said this group would help this campaign live up to its name, and today we see with the work commencing that it truly was a Mission: Possible.”

Under the leadership of the campaign co-chairs, a team of more than 50 volunteers has worked for more than two years with the Mission’s executive director and development office to successfully raise the funds needed. The project’s general contractor, Continental Construction, Gouverneur, has had workers on the ground for about two weeks getting the project moving while staff and volunteers in the Food Pantry and Impossible Dream have been shifting their operations to pave the way for the work to be completed.

“We are blessed to have a great staff with so many great volunteers who stepped up to move the Impossible Dream and get the pantry ready for its reconstruction,” said Erika Flint, Mission executive director. “We will keep the store and pantry open throughout construction, but move the Bridge Program, Critical Needs, Christian Care, HEARTH and our administration to another location to maintain the services.”

Work in the Impossible Dream and Food Pantry is scheduled to be complete by June. For the time being, the store’s merchandise has been moved into the Mission’s Community Room, the Food Pantry’s waiting area, and the Christian Care Center. The Food Pantry will temporarily shift to providing pre-packed groceries to families in need while space is limited. The offices for administration and the Mission’s four other major programs will move by the end of March to Holy Family Church’s McCarthy Hall on Winthrop Street.

The Mission moved into its current facility in 2004, putting all Mission programs under one roof for the first time at 247 Factory Street. The building was first built in 1926 as Empsall's Buick and it was added on to during the 1960s and 1970s when it was the home of Halley Electric. Today, the building provides the right location and the right amount of space for all of the Mission's programs. However, the Mission's focus has always been the people served and now the time has come to make improvements to the building for the future.

The Mission: Possible Capital Campaign seeks to make the Mission's facilities safer, more efficient and better suited for the Mission's programs, all while keeping an eye toward long term sustainability both through the building project and an endowment portion of the campaign.

The Mission: Possible capital campaign will provide for the long term stability in keeping with the strategic plan done in 2010. Included in this campaign is a \$300,000 endowment and a construction plan based on an assessment of the facility done prior to the campaign, which determined that the building is in good overall shape, but needs work to make it safer, more efficient and better suited for the services provided by the Mission.

The work will include improvements to work spaces, putting in universally accessible entrances and bathrooms, removing and replacing dangerous and inefficient electrical and heating systems, reducing energy costs, developing better storage, making loading zones more accessible, renovating the thrift store for increased profitability and setting in place the endowment for long term sustainability, all without changing the character of an organization whose staff and supporters seek to improve lives with the utmost dignity and respect.

In keeping with the Mission's long track record of stretching every dollar to make a maximum impact at minimal expense, the Mission: Possible campaign budget has allotted only 4 cents of every dollar to go toward typical fundraising expenses such as promotional materials, working with local businesses, media organizations and individuals to maximize the percentage of funds used on construction and endowment. To date, the campaign has spent less than 2 cents out of every dollar.

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