

'A welcoming, nourishing place for people who need it'

■ CENTER

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"entirely nonsectarian."

For the Rev. Erica Hewitt, 39, pastor of Live Oak for six years, the decision was a no-brainer.

"I can't think of a better way for our space to be filled than to be a welcoming, nourishing place for people who need it," she said, stopping by on her way to her office.

Most of the Friendship Center activities will take place in the spacious 1,500-square-foot Fellowship Hall with its sparkling white walls and muted gray carpeting.

On one side are four large round tables, where members can have their continental breakfast or lunches, which are delivered by the Community Action Commission. Red-and-white checked tablecloths will be centered with pots of flowers.

Large folding screens separate the dining area from a space that can be used for programs by entertainers, speakers and other knowledgeable people in the community. In the front are a piano and large flat-screen television.

The portable chairs can easily be moved for exercise classes. Adult

SAVE THE DATE

The second annual Wine-Down, a benefit for Friendship Center Goleta, will be held 4 to 6:30 p.m. Aug. 26 at Friendship Center Santa Barbara, 89 Eucalyptus Lane in Montecito. Tickets are \$65. For more information, call 969-0859.

education classes are also offered.

On one wall is a large monthly calendar packed with activities. — yoga, bingo, gardening, "Trudy and Oscar Sing," Bob Wrightman on piano and Papa Heinz on accordion, to name a few.

"The key to our program is socialization for aging, dependent adults. We also serve people who are developmentally disabled," Ms. Holly said.

In one secluded corner of the room, behind a folding screen painted a bright blue with water lilies, is a brown leather recliner.

"It is for a member who doesn't feel well that day," explained Ms. Holly.

Three sets of French doors open to the enclosed courtyard, where there are work tables for projects and patio tables

shaded by forest green market umbrellas, where members can dine al fresco or sit and chat.

"This center has the same indoor/outdoor feel as our Santa Barbara site, which is exactly what we were looking for," Ms. Holly said.

Also part of the complex on slightly more than one acre is an original farmhouse, which has Ms. Eckert's office, a cozy fireside room with floral wallpaper, oak wainscoting and a brick fireplace flanked by cupboards with leaded glass windows.

In stark contrast is the thoroughly modern kitchen, which Friendship Center shares with the Live Oak congregation.

A one-room cottage is furnished with comfy sofas and chairs for participants in "Connections!," a group program for people with early memory loss.

Esther Kratz leads the meetings in Goleta from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesdays, and Susan Jorgensen is the specialist at Monday sessions, which are held the same time at All Saints Parish House across the street from the Santa Barbara center.

"Even though the program meets at the Friendship Center sites, attendees are not in the day program," said Ms. Holly.

Last October, "The Aging Symposium" was held at Fess Parker's Doubletree Resort on East Cabrillo Boulevard to discuss elderly concerns in the community, according to Ms. Holly.

"The No. 1 priority for the elderly was remaining in their homes as long as possible. Friendship Center helps families fulfill that goal," she said. "We do a survey every year among our members, and 100 percent indicated that because of Friendship Center, they were able to delay long-term care."

Jean Taylor, who has a family member at the Santa Barbara center, is looking forward to the opening of the Goleta facility.

"I am so grateful to hear that this program will be opening soon. It will reduce both my stress as well as stress on my mother. The lengthy van ride every day from our home in Goleta has been difficult for my mother, who is quite progressed with her dementia. I'll feel much better knowing that she is close to home."



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An area in the spacious Fellowship Hall is used for programs and exercise classes.

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