

The Laurel Outlook

Laurel, Montana's Weekly Source for News



Crossings under construction

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Plummeting sub-zero temperatures and 6 inches of snow last week brought construction to a standstill at most of the commercial construction projects underway in Laurel - but not at The Crossings on East Maryland being built by St. John's Lutheran Ministries. Crews from High Tech Construction put up walls and placed rafters on the Main Building and the Richardson Cottage.

St. John's Lutheran Ministries senior living community, called The Crossings, is located at the corner of East Maryland and Alder in Laurel.



St. John's began planning the project nearly two years ago and held a ground-breaking last summer. Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Laurel is one of St. John's 22 ownership congregations and its church council has fully endorsed The Crossings project.

The \$8 million construction plan calls for 50 total housing units; a 38-unit apartment building providing for 24 independent living units, as well as 13 units for those who are independent, but rely on a few supportive services.

The main building will also contain a central kitchen and dining area as well as a guest room for family members to occasionally spend the night. The main building has three levels and contains an elevator.

In addition to this larger main building, St. John's will build a 12-bedroom cottage on the site to provide an assisted living home to those with early stages of dementia or Alzheimer's. The cottage has been named the Richardson Cottage, after Dr. Lee Richardson, who has been instrumental in St. John's decision to expand its services to Laurel. Richardson is a member of the St. John's Lutheran Ministries board of directors.

The Crossings Director Chris Kueffler said the Laurel facility will be similar in concept to the Mission Ridge and Vista Buildings on St. John's Billings campus, located at Rimrock Road and Shiloh Road. The Laurel buildings will have a more rustic, cabin-like appearance, according to Kueffler.

The Crossings is located on a corner of Ironhorse Station, the new residential subdivision Marv and Janet Brown are developing. The Browns donated more than four acres of land to St. John's for the site.

Kueffler said The Crossings will initially have 20 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions with a staff of 20 to 30 people. The staff members are called "sharaths" - a Hebrew word for servant. "That seems appropriate. We are here to serve our residents," Kueffler said.

The staff has been trained to serve in cottage concept, senior-living facilities. Kueffler noted the changing trend in providing services for seniors, moving away from nursing homes to smaller cottages with a more friendly environment.

Kueffler plans to have the Richardson Alzheimer Cottage open in May and the Main Building available for residents next fall.

For more information about The Crossings, contact Kueffler at 628-1200 or 655-5736.