

>

By James Post
jpost@the-leader.com
June 21, 2014 6:39PM

Print Page

Youth center renamed to honor Houghton matriarch

The Corning Area Youth Center has a new name, in honor of someone who played a crucial role in its creation.

The Corning Area Youth Center has a new name, in honor of someone who played a crucial role in its creation.

The facility on Flint Avenue will now be known as the Laura Richardson Houghton Corning Youth Center, in honor of the Houghton matriarch who served on the board that presided over the creation of the center.

Her grandson, Rob Houghton, son of Amory Houghton, Jr., said his grandmother would have been uncomfortable with all the attention.

“What she would want to do right away is deflect attention away from her,” he said.

But Michael Gabrielli, a member of the board of the Family Service Society that oversees the youth center, said the facility was something Laura Houghton saw as very important.

“She saw how society was changing,” he said, with working parents often having to leave their children alone, and wanted a safe place for the kids to go.

The process of planning the center included trips to a number of other youth centers in New York state, to learn about best practices used in other communities.

Plus, there was a geographical consideration within the city, said Jim Bacalles, who was also involved in the initial planning of the center.

He said they targeted the Northside neighborhood site because it was near Hugh Gregg Elementary, where children walk to school, and also near Northside Blodgett.

Also, the building was available.

It was being used by the Corning-Painted Post School District to store books, but at that point was essentially empty, Bacalles said.

The interior renovations at the site were done by BOCES students, with materials from a state grant secured with the help of state Sen. Bill Smith.

The addition of the kitchen at the facility was accomplished with an Appalachian Regional Commission grant, Bacalles said.

The day-to-day operation of the kitchen is funded by the Triangle Fund, a Houghton-family philanthropic group now headed by Rob Houghton.

Youth Center Executive Director Robin Foster said the kitchen now serves 12,000-14,000 meals and snacks each year.

Rob Houghton said his grandmother's goal was the same as the goal of the Triangle Fund: to help children.

Though his father couldn't be present for the event, Rob Houghton read a letter he sent in his absence.

It said Laura Richardson Houghton believed she wouldn't live long enough to see the youth center's completion – she eventually passed away in 2002, at age 102 – but believed firmly in its mission.

“She believed in the people of Corning,” he said.

