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Work begins on new animal shelter

By **Robb Murray**
The Free Press

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— A feat that seemed a few years ago to be an impossibility took a giant step toward reality this week as construction crews broke ground and began installing sewer lines for the new Blue Earth Nicollet County Humane Society shelter.

Katherine Nelson, a BENCHS board member, said the shelter has raised \$630,000 since June toward its goal of \$1.2 million. Ground work is expected to continue for the next few weeks, and the shelter is scheduled to be built in March.

“I didn’t think it would ever happen,” Nelson said.

Nearly half the funds necessary to pay for the shelter remain to be raised, but Nelson said they remain optimistic the balance will come.

They’ve also recently launched a campaign to raise funds through the sale of bricks and paver stones. Bricks are \$500 and pavers are \$1,000, and buyers can have their names or a personal message chiseled into the bricks and pavers.

One group heard about the brick and paver project and got to work immediately. Bridges Community School, after a week of creative fundraising, donated \$1,200 and will have a paver chiseled with the school’s name on it.

Nelson said the shelter is also applying for grants to help get the fundraising effort to that \$1.2 million threshold.

The shelter sits on a piece of property that, since its purchase, has increased in value and visibility. The land, purchased with funds donated by the late Shirley O’Grady, sits off Highway 169 near the Living Links building and Mankato Harley Davidson.

“She really wasn’t that known to the shelter,” Nelson said, “but I guess the shelter was known to her.”

A walking path has been installed in the years since the lot purchase, which will provide an ideal location for shelter dogs to take walks. That path also leads to the city’s dog park, another potential resource for shelter dogs.

BENCHS is a “no kill” pet shelter. It has served the Mankato area for 22 years.

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Photos



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