

Art league has big dreams for former Red Cross site

BY JENNIFER BAILEY
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DANVILLE — Danville Art League members have a wide-open canvas to create a new community arts center now that they've gained title to the former American Red Cross building.

The building at Seminary and Franklin streets won't be moved, as originally expected, because senior housing plans fell through at the site due to the lack of state tax credits.

Now, the Danville Art League has a building three times the size of its Sherman Street building, which is currently for sale.

Art league members hope to call the new building their "home" by April 1.

Home-school art classes already are scheduled in the new building starting April 5.

More classes will follow in May.

Art league members — president, Marsha Russell; treasurer, Roberta Williams; Carol Garver and Kem Wiggins — were all smiles recently inside the building.

Wiggins has suggested naming each room a color of the rainbow.

She said they could call one room the "Indigo Gallery."

Russell is amazed at all the storage room for art supplies and other items.

Garver was busy posting notes on the doors of each room that read "Dream Big — What do you see in this space?"

Art league members can weigh in on all the options and possibilities for the rooms.

The members said groups could even adopt a room to help furnish it.

The building, which has been vacant for two years and was built in the early 1980s, has a nice reception area, main meeting room area, two kitchens, restrooms upstairs and down, a large downstairs room for children's art classes and more than 10 offices, storage rooms and closets.

Williams said one room, which was the former Red Cross director's office that has sink access off of it, could be a watercolor room.

Another room likely will serve as



Danville Art League members Marsha Russell, left, and Roberta Williams talk together in one of the big open rooms in the former American Red Cross building that will be the new Art League Building.
Matt Huber/Commercial-News

TO HELP

The Danville Art League is looking for numerous items and help with its new building to convert into adult and children's art classes, studio, gallery, library/media and office space.

Items needed: shades and/or blinds for windows, shelving, chairs, tables, hanging lighting systems, picnic tables, easels, donor plaques, floor sweepers, new signs for the outside of the building, landscaping and flooring assistance.

To offer help or for more information about the art league's plans, e-mail: danvilleartleague@hotmail.com, visit the league's Web site at www.danvilleartleague.com or call 442-9264.

a library and media room, with computers.

"There's so many possibilities," Russell said.

"We can have multiple classes at once," she added about all the space.

The art league has replaced the furnace.

Already, a kiln, pottery wheel and art books have been donated. But

lots more items are needed.

"We're amazed at what good condition the building was in," Garver said.

Next steps include more cleaning up, painting and lining up volunteers to help with landscaping and other improvements.

Wiggins and her daughter, Karena, are serving as co-chairs of the building and grounds committee.

They just became involved with the art league in October, but they love being a part of creating another era for the art league.

The art league celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2008.

The Danville Art League finalized its purchase of the property last month.

The art league changed focus in purchasing the building and adjoining land, instead of moving the building, after being contacted by the building's real estate agent following plans falling through for Sterling Development Corp. The Indiana group was interested in constructing senior housing at the site, but didn't want the building.

The art league raised the \$120,000 needed to purchase the vacant Red Cross building and site.

The new building will have open studio hours like the former building, but more open times.

The building also may be available for meeting space for groups.