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FEATURED

The Lincoln Academy breaks ground

By HILLARY GAVAN Senior staff writer
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(From right): Chairwoman of the Board and Founder of ABC Supply Co. and President of the Kids First Beloit Family System President and CEO Tim McKeveitt, Beloit City Council President Regina Dunkin and others turn dirt at Lincoln Academy held in September at its site at 608 Henry Ave. on the Eclipse Campus.

File photo



BELOIT — “With all the challenges we are facing today in our world, The Lincoln Academy is a beacon of hope for our children and for our future.”

That’s what founding CEO of The Lincoln Academy and Master of Ceremonies Kristi Cole said as she kicked off the ceremony for the official groundbreaking held Wednesday morning at the site of the new school, 608 Henry Ave., on the Eclipse Campus.

The event included remarks by school leadership and supporters as well as a ceremonial turning of the dirt as actual construction was well underway.

The Lincoln Academy is a proposed 4K to grade 12 independent public charter school scheduled to open in September 2021. Land for the school is being donated by Hendricks Commercial Properties, and Kids First Beloit is planning on a three-story school on the site.

At the Wednesday ceremony, Cole said the school will be the premier K-12 school in the state, providing college and career pathways. She said it will be committed to an equitable environment, rigorous curriculum and strong community partnerships.

Cole commended those who came together including Beloit 200 for working to create something remarkable and State Rep. Amy Loudenberg, R-Clinton, for knowing the importance of quality educational options.

Cole said the school will be an incredible place of learning, innovation and imagination.

Chairman of ABC Supply, President of Kids First Beloit Formation Board and Hendricks Family Foundation President of the Board Diane Hendricks said the Lincoln Academy will be the place and environment for children to prepare for a productive and fulfilling life through the joy of learning. She said it would expose youth to a vast spectrum of industries and businesses in Beloit along with partnerships with educational institutions.

“We will always be opening doors and opportunities to the unknown future as it unfolds and we will continually embrace change,” Hendricks said.

Hendricks said every child will graduate with a known career path, enlistment in the armed services or a clear plan to continue their education.

“Through education we can make their lives better. Dreams belong to every child and goals can be achieved,” Hendricks said.

Director of the UW Office of Educational Opportunity Aaron Seligman said his office promotes innovation and pushes thinking about what education can be and how schools can meet needs.

Higher Ground Christian Center Pastor Sherrick Anderson said: “The City of Beloit scored a touchdown with the Lincoln Academy.”

Anderson, born and raised in Beloit, said education is important to him and he is excited that the Lincoln Academy would be “cranking out an assembly line of scholars.”

Parent and community leader Gaby Rojas, who said Beloit has been her home for 13 years, said she believes in empowering parents to be better advocates for their children’s education. She said the Lincoln Academy’s quality leadership and welcoming culture will help her daughter and other scholars fulfill their dreams.

Beloit City Council President Regina Dunkin said Beloit is a diverse city which has had significant enhancements in its infrastructure. She said Hendricks' businesses have played an important role in developing the community.

Dunkin said any improvement that benefits Beloit's children is a worthwhile endeavor, and thanked Hendricks for her continued investment in Beloit.

The charter school is planned to be a public school, not a private choice, or voucher, school. Although charter schools may be authorized through their local school districts, the one proposed by Kids First Beloit has applied to be authorized through the University of Wisconsin System. If authorized as an independent charter, the school would receive state aid per student in the amount of \$8,619.

Plans call for enrollment to begin in February 2021 for students in grades 4K-2 and 7-9. Two grades will be added each subsequent year. Fully enrolled, the school is planned to serve 700 students annually. If the school receives more applications than there are seats available, a public random lottery will be used to determine enrollment, according to information from Kids First Beloit.

The Lincoln Academy is currently operating out of temporary space at 55 Eclipse Blvd. while the school is under construction. The office is open weekdays, with walk-in hours on Wednesdays from noon—4 p.m. or by appointment.

Community members can reach The Lincoln Academy via email at info@tlabeloit.com or by phone to 608-312-2056.

Enrollment for The Lincoln Academy will be Feb. 1-28, 2021. The school is a tuition-free public school open to all Wisconsin students.

The Lincoln Academy, a 4K to grade 12 school, received charter approval from the University of Wisconsin Office of Educational Opportunity in May.

Hillary Gavan