

# News and stories

## **\$100,000+ secured for new Bay City veterans activity center**

Mar 20 2018

Andrew Dodson | [MLive](#)

BAY CITY, MI -- A little more than a month after launching a campaign to open a building where veterans can develop new skills, obtain counseling and enjoy each other's company, the Bay Veterans Foundation has secured more than \$100,000 and has a purchase agreement on some real estate for the venture.

To date, the foundation, led by Keith Markstrom, has raised \$108,000 for the veterans activity center and makerspace. It also has an agreement to purchase the building at 1009 N. Madison Ave., where the Wings and Things bird store is currently located. The sale is pending environmental studies and raising enough money. Markstrom said the foundation needs \$150,000 to close on the building -- \$140,000 for the property and another \$10,000 for insurance and other incidentals related to the sale.

Of the money raised to date, \$75,000 came from Bay County's Soldiers and Sailors Relief Commission, which is funded through a countywide millage. The commission typically helps veterans when they're short on utility and rent bills.

Last week, Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) Local 1098 presented the foundation with a \$2,500 donation.

"Donations like this are a way for Local 1098 and our signatory contractors to give back to the community while supporting an important community resource for Bay Area veterans," said Jeff Pilarski, business agent for the union.

Markstrom said the donation goes beyond a monetary gift.

"The unions recognize this could potentially be a feeder for some folks to come into their trades," he said. "It's tough to find people interested in skilled trades right now, so if we can train some people, maybe we can also get them employed."

Markstrom has enlisted former Delta College skilled trades professor David Bledsoe to help develop a curriculum for veterans to learn everything from basic wood working technique to more advanced skills, like using CNC machines.

"We want to provide that introductory education and be a motivator to encourage them to try something new," Bledsoe said. "Maybe some of these guys will carry on, use their G.I. Bill and go pursue further education."

Markstrom plans to submit grant applications to at least five major foundations in the area. Those interested in donating to the venture can send checks made out to the Bay Veterans Foundation, P.O. Box 1513, Bay City, Michigan, 48706.

At 6 p.m. Thursday, March 22, the Bay Veterans Foundation is hosting an informational meeting about the veterans center at the Dow Bay Area Family Y, 225 Washington Ave.