NWACC ‘Breaks Ground’ on Child Protection Center

Community College Campus Home to Melba Shewmaker Southern Region National Child Protection Training Center

BENTONVILLE, Ark. (March 15, 2013) – NorthWest Arkansas Community College officials and child protection advocates participated in a “ground-breaking” move today as renovation begins to transform a former oncology building into the Melba Shewmaker Southern Region National Child Protection Training Center.

Crafton Tull is providing architectural services for the project, and Nabholz Construction Services is the contractor. The renovation project is expected to take eight months for completion.

Eight individuals – representing the College, the NWACC Foundation, the National Child Protection Training Center and donors – took turns smashing a wall set up in front of the building on Friday to signal the project’s beginning.

Dr. Becky Paneitz, president of NWACC, said College leaders had deliberated for some time on what to call the special event marking the start of the renovation’s beginning.

“It’s not truly a groundbreaking because we aren’t literally turning dirt to make this project take shape,” she said, “but we are breaking new ground in the battle against child abuse.”

The College has been the home of the Southern Region National Child Protection Training Center since 2010. Although the Southern Region site has been operating without dedicated lab facilities, it has still trained thousands of child protection students and professionals from a 16-state region. The Center teaches all mandated reporters, teachers, social workers, counselors, law enforcement officers, first responders, health professionals, attorneys, and members of the judicial and childcare systems to recognize, report, and respond to child abuse and maltreatment.

When the renovation is completed, the hands-on training center will feature a two-story mock home, practice courtroom, child forensic interview rooms, practice medical exam rooms, interactive
video capabilities and flexible use spaces to train child abuse professionals with the latest techniques to identify and eliminate child abuse situations.

A $3 million capital campaign has been under way since 2011 to raise money for the renovation and transformation. That campaign has raised more than $2.5 million toward that goal, enabling the project to begin. The drive is ongoing to raise the additional money that will be needed for furnishings, equipment and information technology.

Speakers included Paneitz; Andrew Lentz, a child forensic interviewer from the Children’s Advocacy Center of Benton County; Stephanie Smith, regional director for the Southern Region National Child Protection Training Center; and Dan Shewmaker, representing the NWACC Board of Trustees.

Additional information about the Center and the “Know Abuse. No Abuse.” fundraising campaign is available by calling Amy Benincosa, development coordinator for NCPTC, at 479-619-4321, or abenincosa@nwacc.edu.

NorthWest Arkansas Community College is a smart choice for students wanting to pursue quality higher education. As an accredited institution through The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, NWACC is a public two-year institution that serves and strengthens its surrounding communities in Benton and Washington counties by helping our students maximize their potential and exceed expectations. With state-of-the-art facilities, NWACC provides excellent academic instruction and workforce training needed to succeed, offering personalized attention from highly respected faculty, staff, and administrators. For more information, visit www.nwacc.edu.