

High Watch Expanding

By Kathryn Boughton, Thursday, July 14, 2011 – Litchfield County Times

KENT—High Watch Farm, the first Alcoholics Anonymous retreat established in this country, stepped into the future of addiction treatment Monday when it broke ground on a state-of-the art \$2 million medical treatment center on its 200-acre campus.

The expansion will allow High Watch to provide more comfortable space for residential treatment, and will also provide an area for educating the public, and members of the government and professional community, about substance abuse treatments and the 12 Steps advocated by AA.

“We practice real addictive medicine,” said medical director Dr. Areste Arcuni, former chairman of Danbury Hospital’s psychiatry department. He said that the psycho/social core of rehabilitation is found in AA’s 12 Steps, but that medical treatment is also need to “reset” the neurochemistry of the brains of those suffering from addictions.

“We need to identify the co-occurring disorders, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, ADHD, depression, and the like, that drive the addiction that the 12 Steps are working around,” he said.

He said that those coming to High Watch have “to want to be here,” although they may find their way to the facility “because they realize what they are doing to others around them or because they have had an unfortunate experience with the law.”

Once they are on the premises, it “sometimes is part of our job to help them realize why they need to be here. We assess their level of motivation,” he said, adding that High Watch treats addiction “as a real illness.”

He said about half of the staff at High Watch are people in recovery and added that he “feels strongly that recovery takes place in an atmosphere of kindness.”

The Kent campus currently has nine buildings, most dedicated to dormitories, with the remainder consisting of a large barn converted to a dining hall and often used for AA meetings, a chapel, and an office building.

Janina Kean, CEO of High Watch, greeted the guests attending the groundbreaking Monday. In opening, she paid tribute the late First Lady Betty Ford, who famously opened up about her own addictions, paving the way for thousands to find their way back to health. "But there is still much to be done," said Ms. Kean, "and our new facility has been designed and is being built on behalf of our patients. ... It is part of our history of care and caring."

State Sen. Andrew Roraback (R-Goshen) and Kent First Selectman Bruce Adams were among those who participated in the groundbreaking.