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Article published Oct 25, 2007

New OC vacation home for ill children to open

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OCEAN CITY -- The town will serve as a peaceful getaway for even more families with critically ill children next summer with the addition of the Believe in Tomorrow House by the Bay on 28th Street.

"We want to do as much as we can for them," said Wayne Littleton, who operates the main location on 66th Street.

Ocean City has offered a free vacation for families with critically ill children for eight years through the Believe in Tomorrow program. Believe in Tomorrow was founded in 1982 and headquartered in Baltimore, providing hospital and retreat services.

"We purchased this land a long time ago and held onto it long enough to pay it off," Littleton said about the Believe in Tomorrow House by the Sea.

But the recently donated location won't cost the organization a thing. John and Karen Talbott decided after agreeing they didn't need the home anymore to give it and its beautiful view to families in the program.

The house will be a vacation spot for military families as part of Believe in Tomorrow's recent military initiative to help families in the service whose children have life-threatening diseases.

"We had three or four families last summer whose fathers had just been shipped out," Littleton said.

The foundation's focus on military families rose through the observation that the hardship was more stressful on them, since many times both parents are not present and the children need extra support.

"I can't even understand what they go through," Littleton said. "We just want to give them a vacation they'll never forget."

When families arrive in one of the four Ocean City and Fenwick Island locations, they first meet with Littleton to talk about exactly what they want out of their retreat.

"Every summer when the families come in, we meet with them and explain everything we can do for them," he said. "We have activities from photography on the beach to family cookouts. Or if they just need to relax, we won't hear from them for the rest of the week."

Summer retreats are reserved for families who are experiencing their first time with Believe in Tomorrow. Littleton said after that, it's never hard to get them to come back.

"After their first stay they always ask when they can book for next summer, but that's when I have to tell them first-time families receive priority," he said.

The houses aren't empty in the winter. Littleton said families have the option of one summer retreat and two winter retreats, which they usually use.

"They don't always have to book in advance; if they call me after having a rough week and ask if I have anything open, there's a good chance I can get them in here," he said.

And after a rough week of treatment, a nice vacation could be just what a family might need.

"After treatment a child is usually not feeling well," he said. "But even if they aren't feeling well and they're

here, it's like night and day."

Though the new Believe in Tomorrow House is designated for military families, if none are booked, Littleton said the house won't sit empty.

Another family will be allowed to use it. He said the new location will be ready in the spring.

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