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## Kroc Center is closer to being reality in South Bend

**Extra money to ensure Salvation Army can build everything.**

By **JOSEPH DITS** *Tribune Staff Writer*

SOUTH BEND -- The Salvation Army of St. Joseph County has landed an extra \$7.5 million from its territorial headquarters to build and run its dream: a huge community center known as the Kroc Center.

That doesn't subtract from what the local Salvation Army must raise -- \$10 million -- to draw much larger sums from the estate of the late Joan Kroc for the center's construction and endowment.

The Army has raised \$7.56 million so far, says Maj. Bob Webster, who heads up the local corps. He's optimistic they can still break ground in May at the current Alonzo Watson Park at Western Avenue and Chapin Street.

The extra money comes after the last pieces of Kroc's estate were sold off and settled in September. Kroc's husband was the McDonald's fast-food founder. She died in 2003, leaving The Salvation Army with money to build centers around the country.

Is the extra money a vote of confidence in the local project? "Oh, definitely," says Col. Carol Seiler, coordinator of strategic mission planning for The Salvation Army's Midwestern territory, which covers 11 states.

She says it reflects the quality of the local project and its ability to raise the matching dollars.

Webster says \$5 million would go toward construction, raising that cost to \$30 million. The other \$2.5 million would go to the endowment, which would be worth \$32.5 million, to keep the center running.

But none of it goes to The Salvation Army's Christmas campaign -- from bell ringers to a mail appeal -- which covers about half of the annual budget for its youth programs, food pantry and financial aid for the needy. This season's goal for that is \$250,000 for the St. Joseph County corps, Webster says.

**To be big enough** The new Kroc money is going to five of the six Kroc Center projects in the Midwestern territory, including this one, Seiler says. It's all for similar reasons, she adds: The projects found that they couldn't build centers that were as extensive as they'd hoped. Their dreams exceeded their budgets.

But "nothing is extravagant," she says, adding that the Army campaigns are working hard to be "budget conscious."

In South Bend, Webster says, the project was looking at trimming space from its auditorium, aquatic center, gym and arts facility, and possibly cutting out its recording studio.

The original plans for an 85,000-square-foot building had been scaled back to 79,000 square feet. The extra money now boosts it to 97,000 square feet. This, Seiler says, ensures the "wow factor" that Kroc envisioned -- so that the centers would serve as beacons in their communities.

The aquatic center alone would offer a chance for play, exercise and swim lessons, Webster says. There would be a three-lane lap pool, water slide, whirlpool and "lazy river."

### Helping, entertaining

- Go to the Web site [www.sjarmy.org](http://www.sjarmy.org) if you want to donate to the Kroc Center campaign or help the Christmas campaign for the corps of The Salvation Army of St. Joseph County, either by volunteering or donating.

- To help distribute Christmas gifts and food to the needy, call (574) 233-9471. There's a screening process for this volunteer work.

- Don't confuse the two: Money raised through the Kroc Center campaign doesn't go to The Salvation Army corps' daily operations like its youth programs, food pantry and help with utilities. By the same token, donations in the Christmas campaign (red kettles, mail appeal, etc.) only go to those daily operations.

- The public is invited to a free concert Sunday by 17 youths who've learned to play trumpet, drum and piano through The Salvation Army's new program, BandLINK. They'll perform from 3 to 4 p.m. at the Charles Martin Youth Center, 802 Lincoln Way W., South Bend. BandLINK is a program in which youth learn to play the music from the University of Notre Dame's marching band students and faculty. This will be the group's first public performance.