



- News
- Top Stories
- Sports
- Business
- Entertainment
- Police/Courts
- Editorial
- Columnists
- Weather
- AP - The Wire
- TV Listings
- Movie Listings
- Local Marketplace
- On-line extra
- National News
- Classifieds
- Business Directory
- Our Newspaper
- Subscription Info
- Personals
- Newsstand
- Message Board
- Sports Wire!
- Fun and Games
- Consumer Guide
- Personal Finance
- Lifestyles
- USA Weekend

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Top Stories

Ceremony heralds start of Pawtucket Armory project

Jeff Sullivan 08/21/2003

PAWTUCKET -- Last December was the easy part for the Pawtucket Armory Association, when it purchased the abandoned National Guard Armory from the city for \$1. Now it needs to raise a little more to reach its ultimate goal of renovating the building into a regional performing arts center.

About \$6.5 million.

Pawtucket Armory Association President Seth Handy hosted more than 100 people Wednesday at the armory for the official groundbreaking and celebration of the start of Phase I of the renovation -- and the establishment of The Arts Exchange, a center for the arts and arts education.

Phase I includes the conversion of the 43,000-square-foot annex to a theater scheduled to open in October.

"The whole process has been very positive, and we've received great support from the government officials and the public," said Handy. "We're looking forward to Oct. and the public response to the opening. We think it'll be great and sometimes people need convincing with a project like this, convincing in terms of something completed and it should have a huge impact."

Handy said more than \$1 million has been raised through private fund-raising and that the PAA has \$2 million in tax credit that it can sell, leaving it almost halfway to its goal. Sometime next spring, Handy hopes to host a public event that will kick start the second phase of fund-raising.

Handy hopes the entire project is complete by Sept. of 2005.

"If things treat us right, we could even be in position by late 2003 to start the public fund-raising stage," said Handy. "We want a big event, and that takes time to organize itself."

For information, volunteering, or financial support, please call 421-0723.

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Back to top



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