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Reading School District to Construct Dedicated Knight's Keep at Reading High School

Expected completion scheduled for August 2024

READING, PA — The Reading School District is set to begin construction on a dedicated space at RHS to help address the essential needs of its students. The Knight's Keep will directly support those who are experiencing homelessness or otherwise at risk.

The Knight's Keep initiative stems, in part, from the success of the Knight's Closet program, which is named after the district's Red Knights mascot and provides students with necessities like food, clothing, hygiene products, and school supplies. The Knight's Keep represents a significant expansion, creating a comprehensive and dedicated space for students in need.

Conceptualized by the RHS social work team, the Knight's Keep is inspired by the location in a castle where knights seek refuge after a battle. It was initially envisioned as a shower facility for unaccompanied youth. Over time, the concept has evolved and now includes a range of services addressing the basic needs of students.

"The Knight's Keep is a crucial resource in our commitment to supporting our students who face challenges in accessing essential resources," said Dr. Jennifer Murray, RSD Superintendent. "Going beyond providing basic necessities, it seeks to restore dignity by eliminating the stigma associated with their challenges. Many of these students, while having a place to sleep, may still require resources such as laundry facilities and a dedicated space to catch up academically, supporting their overall wellbeing."

The dedicated space, located on the lower level of the rear building at RHS, will feature essential amenities, including a kitchenette, entertainment space, laundry area, study room, and ADA-compliant shower facilities. Operating from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., the facility will be staffed with social workers and counselors to provide additional support.

Construction for the Knight's Keep at RHS on February 5, with an expected completion date of mid- to late-August. A ribbon-cutting ceremony will mark the official opening.

Additionally, the Reading School District aims to extend the Knight's Keep initiative to the new STEM Academy, with plans for a similar dedicated space to be operational in the 2025-26 school year.

Recognizing the ongoing need for supplies and equipment, the district may seek support from the community to sustain and enhance the Knight's Keep initiative.

In the 2021-22 school year, 887 students in the district were identified as homeless. The subsequent 2022-23 school year saw 583 students identified as homeless, including 275 in high school. The district expects an increase in that number upon the official release of updated figures by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

To view a rendering of the Knight's Keep at Reading High School, please visit <https://bit.ly/rhskinghtskeeprendering>. To learn more about the Reading School District's Knight's Closet initiative or to donate to its cause, go to <https://www.readingsd.org/Page/403>.

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