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P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Saint Francis Ministries, St. John's Military School Announce Collaboration for Salina Campus

SALINA, Kansas – Leaders of Saint Francis Ministries and St. John's Military School on Thursday announced a collaboration that will create a positive, empowering future for the school's Salina campus.

Saint Francis Ministries has agreed to take over the St. John's campus and will lead a collaborative effort to establish future plans for the property. The campus will become part of the long-time Salina-based nonprofit that provides child welfare and adult services in six states and internationally.

The Very Rev. Robert N. Smith, Saint Francis dean, president and CEO, said the focus for St. John's campus will be creating a ministry that addresses important needs, while honoring the values of both organizations.

"We are pleased and grateful that St. John's leaders selected Saint Francis as we live into a time of transformation for the campus, giving us the opportunity to build on such a deep tradition and heritage of service," Smith said.

William J. Clark, St. John's president and CEO, is excited for the next steps that will occur in the 131-year history of St. John's.

"The mission of St. John's lives on in this new partnership, and we have been encouraged by Saint Francis' commitment to continue our mission of serving youth and families," he said. "The devotion of Saint Francis to youth and families is undeniable. Saint Francis is the perfect partner to carry forward the St. John's mission. I am excited about what the future will bring and am honored to be moving forward with such a fine organization."

Saint Francis will partner with the Salina community, local businesses and other organizations to determine potential uses for the campus, located at 110 W. Otis Ave. Under consideration are plans to consolidate Saint Francis' Salina offices on the campus.

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“As we work on the future of St. John’s campus, all options will align with the Saint Francis mission to provide healing and hope to children and families,” Smith said. “One area of passion for us is to find innovative solutions, such as a residential workforce program, to help address the growing numbers of children aging out of foster care who need ongoing support and guidance.”

Such a program would provide training in soft skills needed to be successful in the job market, and also would provide skills training to meet the needs of area businesses, Smith said. Young people aging out of the foster care system face challenges that can make their entry into adulthood difficult, and Saint Francis has been considering for some time ways in which that transition can be better supported.

“Access to dignified work can be life transforming. We are fortunate in Salina to have support of the civic, educational, business and industry leaders who have expressed a strong desire to partner with us to move from visioning to reality,” said Tom Blythe, Saint Francis president and COO.

For many long-time supporters of St. John’s mission and work, this announcement is bittersweet.

“St. John’s taught character, morality, ethics, and gave a good education to prepare students for a higher education in college,” said Dale Browning, former headmaster of the school. “The Saint Francis mission is so admirable and very consistent with the mission of St. John’s. I personally am so very, very pleased and optimistic about what can happen with this merger.”

Browning said he was happy Saint Francis will continue to serve youth and families, and he appreciates that Saint Francis programs will support the Salina community.

St. John’s Military School history and mission will be honored on the school’s campus through the establishment of a historical museum in Linger Hall. Plans currently are being made by St. John’s supporters to create the facility, which will house historical uniforms and other memorabilia, Browning said.

About Saint Francis Ministries

Rooted in the Episcopal tradition, Saint Francis Ministries encompasses foster care, therapeutic foster care, adoption, family preservation, residential care and community outreach services, as well as refugee resettlement services through Saint Francis Migration Ministries.

Founded in 1945 in Ellsworth, Kan., the organization now serves more than 31,000 individuals through child and family welfare services in Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, Illinois and Central America. The organization is headquartered in Salina, Kansas. To learn more, visit saintfrancisministries.org.

About St. John’s Military School

Founded in 1887, St. John’s Military School was a faith-based, private school committed to the development of young men. The school’s principal objective has been to help ensure the future lives of young men are filled with success, happiness and personal fulfillment.

Through a rigorous academic environment, complemented by a structured campus life, the school promoted academics and the development of personal qualities such as social graces, confidence, respect, high moral character and leadership values. This unique environment has helped each cadet develop a high degree of self-discipline, personal accountability and self-confidence in their abilities.