

Old South High renovation in progress

By design on January 5, 2020 · No Comment



By Mike Steely

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Old South High School's transformation to South High Senior Living is progressing nicely! The conversion of the old school, which was built in 1937 and closed following the graduation of the class of 1976, is quickly transforming into the vision of Dover Signature Properties.

Dover Signature Properties is developing a new Assisted Living and Memory Care community to be managed by Integral Senior Living when completed in April 2020. The project is estimated at \$12.2 million to restore and renovate the 42,000-square foot building.

Helen Porter, executive director of South Knox High Senior Living, toured the renovations last week and is excited about the progress. She is a certified dementia practitioner and an Alzheimer's disease and dementia care trainer. Porter said that this will be one of the most beautiful senior living communities in Knoxville and said she is thrilled for South Knoxville natives to have a place to call home. Thirty-four apartments will be devoted

to assisted living residents and 24 will be devoted to memory care residents. Individuals age 62 years and older may qualify for care in the community.

South High Senior Living will offer a "vibrant way of life" with elevated dining, exercise classes, a full-time nurse and care staff, transportation services, shopping, church services, and much more.

"The Great Room will have the dining room and a piano lounge," she said, adding "I get kind of giddy every time I walk into that gymnasium wondering what it will look like." After peering into other rooms she wondered about the history of the former school.

"I love thinking about the history of the basketball games played or the students who were taught in each room," she said. "I am thrilled to have the opportunity to manage a production of Dover Signature Properties. Rick Dover does a phenomenal job in creating the most spectacular creations that modernizes and protects the story of the building."

"I'm excited to hear more of the memories, there's lots of memories in these walls," Potter said. She said she had attended a meeting of the South Knox Alliance and was surprised by the number of favorable comments and questions about the project.

"We're going to display a wall of photos and memorabilia, much like Rick does in his other historic projects. I know Rick has collected some items," she said.

Following the visit to the school Porter walked up to the Knox County Education Museum next door and was astonished at the memorabilia that the volunteer museum has collected, especially the South High items.

Volunteer Horace Grissom greeted her and explained the collection of annuals, photos, and other items there. Porter looked through the huge collection and focused on the South High items.

Grissom said that if the museum has extra South Knox High School items they might share them with the senior living facility. Porter was delighted with the possibility. He guided her through part of the collection showing her books on every school. The museum volunteers go through local newspapers and clip stories for the collection, updating the history every week.

He encouraged Porter to meet with Benna Van Vurren who founded the education museum and continues to direct it.

South High Senior Living is located at 835 Tipton Avenue. You can contact Helen Porter at (865) 438-3044 or email her at SouthHighEd@islllc.com.

You can also find them on Facebook and on the internet at southhighknoxville.com.



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