

CALIFORNIA SHOOTING: Denied again by people he hated, gunman improvised. 6A



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**A living symbol:** Light of hope – a symbol of  
the fight against cancer – is about to be turned on.  
**Local, 3A**

MONDAY, MAY 26, 2014

Vol. 121, No. 146

## Light of hope about to be turned on



Metropolis Hope Light outside Parker Custom Machine Shop

BY NICK MARIANO

**METROPOLIS** -- After nine years, the first beacon of hope against cancer for Southern Illinois will arrive at its permanent home this week.

The Hope Light, a \$53,000 lighthouse, will serve as a symbol of the fight against cancer and the hope many in the region endure for themselves and loved ones, said Rudy Bess, founding director of The Hope Light Foundation.

Bess and his wife, Beverly, started the foundation in 2005 after learning on July 4 that a relative and a good friend had died from cancer within 15 minutes of each other. Bess has many other relatives who have either died or fought the disease.

In an effort to raise awareness about cancer and to encourage early screenings in hopes of saving lives, the lighthouse project was born that year, Bess said from his St. Louis office.

The foundation serves Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky and Missouri.

“Lighthouses are looked upon as a guiding light for safe harbor. People look at lighthouses as a source of inspiration, a source of hope ... that the people who get cancer will be survivors,” Bess said.

The 30-foot-tall lighthouse was paid for through a variety of donations, including \$25,000 from the city’s Metropolis Area Tourism Commission. The city also donated land within Dorothy Miller Park for the lighthouse, just off the Ohio River.

The foundation also sold bricks people could personalize to help raise money. The bricks will serve as a pathway around the tower. A ribbon-cutting is being planned in about a month when work around the lighthouse is complete.

Numerous others gave their time to the project, including the firm of Eggemeyer Associates Architects in Carbondale, involved in the project since 2006 when then-President Andy Eggemeyer and his wife, Toni, learned she had Stage 4 cancer.

She survived, but Andy later died from cancer, said Mark Dillon, the firm's current president. Since then, Dillon's father died of leukemia and several others at the firm have lost family to cancer.

"It's a very personal project for all of us," Dillon said. "I don't think there is a person I know that hasn't been affected somehow."

Metropolis Mayor Billy McDaniel agreed.

"It's a living symbol for Rudy and Beverly," McDaniel said, pointing the many hours of time they have devoted to the project. "It takes a lot. I think they have done a good job of it."

Bess said he hopes the lighthouse is the first of several to be located along the Ohio River in the years to come.

The foundation also supports a number of Hope Light Cancer Corners located at libraries, health departments, hospitals and universities to disseminate information about cancer. One is located at the public library in Metropolis.

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