

# METROPOLIS PLANET



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## 'Let there be light': Metropolis Hope Light lighthouse dedicated during ceremony

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Once upon a time, a couple had a dream that a lighthouse dedicated to cancer would stand on the Ohio River.

After years of planning, changes and fundraising, Rudy and Beverly Bess saw that dream become a reality when the Metropolis Hope Light was placed at its home in Dorothy Miller Park on June 4.

That reality came to a close on Wednesday, Nov. 5 when the Metropolis Hope Light Project (MHLP) committee held a dedication ceremony for the world's first lighthouse dedicated to the fight against cancer.

The afternoon began with an awards luncheon at Harrah's where Rudy Bess recognized all of those

who've had a part in the project since it began in 2005, when the couple established the Hope Light Foundation as a 501c3 non-profit public charity following the deaths of Rudy's nephew and one of Beverly's closest friends within 15 minutes of each other due to cancer.

"We decided it was time to do something about it," he said. "People like lighthouses. They are sources of hope, refuge. We looked at various places on the river to put up lighthouses, and we came to our hometown of Metropolis. I contacted Mayor Billy McDaniel; the city council approved it; and it took us nine years, but we did it. A lot of people had a part in making this happen."

Bess then recognized those 27 individuals, businesses and organizations, presenting them Lenox crystal lighthouse awards or certi-

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**Rudy Bess**  
*Hope Light Foundation founder*

icates of appreciation for their support over the last nine years. Matt Parker, owner of Parker Custom Machine Shop, which constructed the lighthouse, was given the special designation of honorary lighthouse keeper.

An hour later, it would be Parker who officially turned on the light as MHLP committee chairman Bill Carrell proclaimed: "Mr. Lighthouse Keeper, let there be light."

That light, Bess noted, along with the 30-foot lighthouse structure as a whole — the 10-foot lantern room, the 20-foot conical shaped, steel sided, white tower and 2 1/2-foot

teal-colored daymark band — has a special significance.

"When we first started this lighthouse, we did it for a reason. We've had a lot of friends survive or pass away from various forms of cancer," he said. "This lighthouse has a meaning:

- "the daymark band — even though its teal for ovarian cancer, it represents all cancers.

- "the lantern room — represents the dark journey cancer patients go through.

- "the white tower — a tribute to the fight against lung cancer. This is the most deadly of all cancers throughout the world. In Massac County, lung cancer contributes to 18 deaths a year, which is 40 percent of the county's total 45 cancer deaths per year. Worldwide, lung cancer accounts for almost 20 percent of all cancer deaths.

- "the light — represents hope. You see the light at the end of the tunnel. You're out at sea and you look back toward shore to see light that provides direction to a safe harbor."

The lantern and light of the Metropolis Hope Light are official lighthouse equipment. To simulate a lighthouse's rotation, the light is set to blink for a half second every three seconds. That comes to some 9 million flashes a year. According to the latest statistics, by 2015, the number of worldwide cancer death is expected to reach 9 million. That means, Bess noted, that each blink equates to one cancer death somewhere in the world.

"We're not an official aid to navigation (on the river)," Bess emphasized, "but we are an official navi-

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## LIGHT

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gator to help people navigate through the process of fighting cancer. We want to give them information. That's what we're all about."

That information is supplied in two ways:

- the foundation's website — hopelightproject.com.

- and the Cancer Corners established at 14 libraries in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky and Missouri. The first being at the Metropolis Public Library.

"Over the nine year process of the project, we went through probably 10 different versions of what you see here today," said Mark Dillon, president of Eggemeyer Associates Architects, the Carbondale-based firm that has been affiliated with the project since 2005, providing the architectural/engineering

design at no cost.

The firm's founder Andy Eggemeyer became involved with the project after his wife Toni developed cancer.

Eggemeyer passed away three years ago of cancer. Toni was present at the dedication ceremony.

Dillon explained the design process eventually "focus(ed) on the tower itself — to rely on that symbolism, that hope, that Rudy spoke of.

Through a very collaborative effort — (Rudy) you always say we designed it, but it wasn't just us, it was a group project — we came back with what you see here today. You've got to give a lot of credit to Matt Parker. When Matt came on board to build it, he had ideas. When we decided to use him for

an all steel structure, we really had to work with him on how those materials were going to fit this vision. Although we like to take pride in the project, it is not just an Eggemeyer Architects design — it is a community effort," Dillon said.

The Metropolis Hope Light lighthouse has been approved as an official state attraction by the Illinois Office of Tourism.

Interstate attraction signs will be placed along I-24, in addition to waymarker signs from the interstate along Hwy. 45 to the lighthouse.

Personalized bricks at the lighthouse are still available.

There are three style options: a 4x8 brick is \$35 providing three lines with up to 12 characters/spaces per line; an 8x8 brick with writing only

is \$70 providing six lines with up to 12 characters/spaces per line; or an 8x8 brick with a logo and six lines with up to 12 characters/spaces per line is \$100.

They can be ordered at Metropolis Chamber of Commerce, Metropolis City Hall, Metropolis Public Library or City National Bank; or through [www.hopelightproject.com](http://www.hopelightproject.com) or [facebook.com/MetropolisHopeLight](https://www.facebook.com/MetropolisHopeLight).

Donations to the MHLP are also being accepted to go toward the lighthouse's maintenance costs.

All of these donations are tax deductible to the non-profit public charity.

They can be made at at City National Bank where the project account is established.