



Birmingham facility for wounded troops slated

By Michael Tomberlin -- The Birmingham News

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Birmingham's Dungan Nequette Architects designed the Cottages of Lakeshore that Capstone Development wants to build near the Lakeshore Foundation.

Capstone Development Corp. has built a reputation by erecting student housing worth \$2.3 billion at 54 colleges around the nation. But the company's president finds a great reward in a \$2.3 million project for wounded warriors and their families close to home.

"I've been at groundbreakings from New York to California," Mike Mouron said. "This is the groundbreaking and the ribbon cutting I am most looking forward to. This will be the smallest one, but the one I'm most proud of."

Mouron and his **Operation Lakeshore** campaign aim to start work on the \$2.3 million **Cottages of Lakeshore** with a groundbreaking slated for April. The project calls for two three-bedroom cottages and four duplex cottages, along with a courtyard, playground, fountain and other touches.

Severely injured military personnel from across the country participating in the Lakeshore Foundation's **Lima Foxtrot** programs will be able to use the cottages. Participants now stay in a dormitory, which often prevents family members from staying with them.

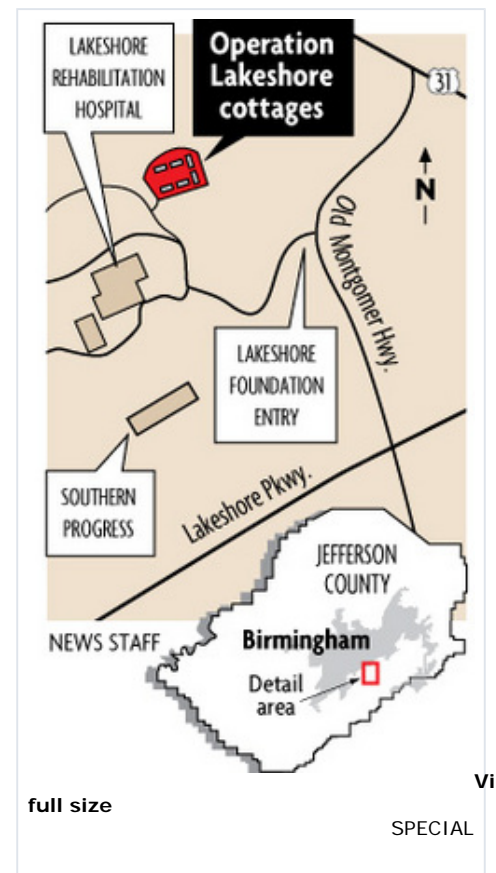
All Lima Foxtrot programs are free to injured service personnel and a guest, with transportation, lodging, meals and activities provided also at no cost. The program helps wounded warriors regain independence by allowing them to participate in activities.

"This cottage-style housing will allow us to expand our injured military programs by providing longer visits with more individualized attention for our country's servicemen and women," said Jeff Underwood, president of Lakeshore Foundation. "However, the real benefit these injured veterans will receive from this project is being able to bring their entire family with them to share in their experience of regaining a healthy, active, independent lifestyle."

Mouron said the cottages were designed by Birmingham-based Dungan Nequette Architects, known for its high-end projects on the Gulf Coast and across the nation. In fact, the design is taken from the \$53 million Creekside project developed by Capstone and Dungan Nequette near Auburn University.

Operation Lakeshore was formed to raise money for the project. Mouron said \$1.3 million of the \$2.3 million goal has already been raised, mostly through donated materials and services.

"There has been a tremendous outpouring of support because this is obviously something everybody cares about," Mouron said. "I literally



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can't think of anyone involved in this that is being paid anything."

Mouron said items from building materials to furniture are being donated. Partners include Whirlpool, Kohler, LG, Design House, LP Building Products, Silverline Windows, WeatherTech Distributing Co., Provenance Digital Media, Appalachian University Systems and Lakeshore Foundation.

"It's been a real community effort," Mouron said.

Fundraising continues

The project is looking to sell naming rights on the cottages and other areas of the development along with donations to raise the remaining \$1 million. Donations can be made at www.OperationLakeshore.com.

Mouron said he became involved in the project when his wife saw a story in The Birmingham News about Lakeshore Foundation's work. After visiting Lakeshore Foundation and seeing a need for family housing, Mouron came up with the Operation Lakeshore idea.

"Being together is important to the injured service member and it's important to the family," Mouron said. "It becomes very cathartic for everyone."

Mouron said plans are to have a ribbon-cutting for the opening on Veterans Day 2010.

"That felt like an appropriate date," he said.

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