

## Southern Door Family Centers relocating

Move to former tractor dealership gets under way Monday

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The Southern Door Family Center is relocating to a building at 1400 County DK, Brussels. The agency will move its office furniture and equipment into the building on Monday. (Pamela Parks/For the Door County Advocate)

As the Family Centers of Door County prepares to celebrate 12 years of serving families and the community, one of its outreach areas has finally found a suitable home.

The Southern Door Family Center will move Monday into its spacious new home in Brussels. One of five Family Centers throughout the county, the Southern Door center has not been able to sink its roots in deep in any one location for long.

The new facility is renting the building known as the former John Deere dealership and more recently the Ester Water Treatment business at 1400 County DK in downtown Brussels, adjacent to the town's park. Terry and Mary Cochart own the building.

"The owners of the building have been very accommodating," said Gina Wautier, executive director for the Family Centers of Door County. "They are happy to see the building used for multiple programs and are supportive of the Family Centers' vision for the new center in Brussels."

The Southern Door Family Center has been moved around a bit since the 1998. It started in Southern Door School and moved to a small office in Maplewood with assistance from HELP of Door County for several years, and then to Wautier's home office to save costs.

"We have used the Forestville Town Hall, the Southern Door School auditorium and classrooms, and the YMCA Camp Wabansi for larger functions," Wautier said. "We have larger facilities for our other Family Centers, and the need was greater for Southern Door ... This gives us a place of our own."

In addition to Southern Door, the Family Centers of Door County are located at Mosling Rec Center on Washington Island, the Northern Door Children's Center in Sister Bay, and the YMCA in both Fish Creek and Sturgeon Bay.

Host sites provide space and promotional materials to conduct Family Centers events, and, in some cases, provide support staff to assist the Family Centers in their efforts to strengthen and support families and communities. These other satellite centers still will offer programs in their communities.

"Most Family Centers are family resource centers. They have space to display brochures from other agencies or programs that are trying to reach the same people and foster their missions. Agencies use us as a conduit to reaching more families," Wautier said. Providing resources and referral has been more challenging in Southern Door due to a lack of adequate space for a center.

By downsizing into her home office, Wautier was able to add additional part-time staff and increase programs that are serving more families.

The new center has two small conference rooms, generous office space, a garage area, storage and a large multipurpose room with an area for a lounge.

"In addition to the services already being provided to people of all ages, the move to a larger facility will allow the Family Centers to offer more programs for the Southern Door community," she said.

A grant from the Raibrook Foundation supports this project for one year and allows the spaces to be used by other nonprofit organizations and civic groups free of charge or at a low cost, depending upon the type of event. The Family Centers organization will coordinate all bookings.

"Since the highway moved, Brussels is not as busy," Wautier said. "By having a space to offer programs, we are hoping that people will visit the area businesses as well. Our mission is to strengthen and support families and communities. Ultimately, by providing a space and activities, we are strengthening the community as well."

•FYI ...

A grand opening and dedication for the Southern Door office of the Family Centers of Door County is scheduled for Sept. 12 during the Belgian Kermis event to be held at the new facility at 1400 County DK, Brussels. Visit [www.familycentersdc.com](http://www.familycentersdc.com) for more information.

Share future program ideas or to use space at the Southern Door Family Center, contact Gina Wautier at (920) 495-1062.