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## **Centreville labor center set to open** by Kali Schumitz

Staff Writer

The sight of a group of day laborers waiting on the corner to pick up temporary jobs may soon be a thing of the past in Centreville.

The Centreville Labor Resource Center is slated to open Dec. 5. It is occupying two storefront spaces in the Centreville Square shopping center.

Like the now-defunct labor center that operated in the Town of Herndon, the Centreville Labor Resource Center will provide an organized system for workers to obtain temporary work, as well as shelter from the elements and educational programs.

"I think all of us think that this will benefit the whole community," said Alice Foltz, president of the Centreville Immigration Forum. "Even beyond the benefits of safety and comfort, there will be benefits as the community continues to work together, both longtime residents and the workers."

The Centreville Immigration Forum is the nonprofit behind the resource center. It formed as a church group in 2007 and grew into a community nonprofit designed to provide outreach and services to Centreville's growing immigrant community. It began raising money to support a day labor center in 2010.

Shani Moser is the new director of the Labor Resource Center. The forum is working to hire a second part-time employee to help run the center.

The center will be open from 6 a.m. to noon, Monday through Saturday. All of the workers will need to register with the center and agree to a code of conduct, which a worker's committee crafted.

Employers coming to hire laborers at the center also will have to fill out a form that states where the worker will be going for the day, and what the agreed-upon pay for the task is. It also will include contact information for the employer.

Available work will be distributed via a lottery system. Workers who have specialized trade skills can enter smaller trade-based lotteries. Employers also will have the option to hire a specific worker if they wish, Moser said.

The other section of the storefronts will be set up for volunteers to teach English and possibly job skills or other types of classes, Moser said.

The registration process will not include information about a worker's legal status, but the Resource Center expects employers to follow state and federal laws, Foltz said.

There are people in the Centreville community concerned about the legal status of the workers and about the larger immigration issues, said Supervisor Michael Frey (R-Sully). But he thinks the center offers a viable solution to a community problem.

"I understand the people whose issue is immigration and who are against illegal immigrants," Frey said. "But that's above my pay grade. They need to work with [U.S. Reps.] Frank Wolf and Gerry Connolly and [Sen.] Mark Warner."

Frey said he has heard concerns from many constituents over the past five years or so that the laborers have been hanging out near the shopping centers to pick up work. While there have been few actual problems, he understands why it is disconcerting to have a large group of men standing on a street corner, he said.

"Clearly, if people perceive that it is not the kind of place that they want to go and they don't go, it is a problem," he said.

Foltz said she has been pleasantly surprised by the growing levels of financial and volunteer support for the Centreville Immigration Forum that have made the center a reality.

"I think the community has been very positive," she said.

kschumitz@fairfaxtimes.com