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Salvation Army raises \$1 million for Building

The Salvation Army has raised \$1 million toward the \$1.7 million price tag for the purchase and renovation of the former YMCA building in Benton Harbor.

Arnie Weaver, president of Pinnacle Bank and co-chairman of the Salvation Army's capital campaign, made the announcement at a dinner Thursday at Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center in Benton Township. He also named former three-time heavyweight champion boxer Muhammad Ali, who lives in Berrien Springs, as honorary chairman for the campaign.

Now that the annual United Way fund drive is completed, the Salvation Army will become more active in the community to complete its fund raising, Weaver said.

"Maybe that (\$1 million) was the low-hanging fruit that was easy to pick; from now on it may be more difficult," he said.

The Salvation Army plans to purchase the building to gain more space for the services the offer and provide a larger and renovated facility for the Soup Kitchen.

More than 800 people attended the dinner, which honored not only Ali, but the volunteers, donors, community leaders and social agencies that work with Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen and the Salvation Army.

Yolanda "Lonnie" Ali gave the keynote address and focused on the effect of hunger on children.

"Of everyone who is hungry in America, children are the most vulnerable," she said.

Children need good nutrition in each growing stage of their lives, Ali said. Because of hunger, children are not growing as they should.

"If you don't deliver the bricks when the builders are on the site, the building doesn't get built properly," she said.

Street people are just the tip of the hunger iceberg because many hungry people have homes, they just don't

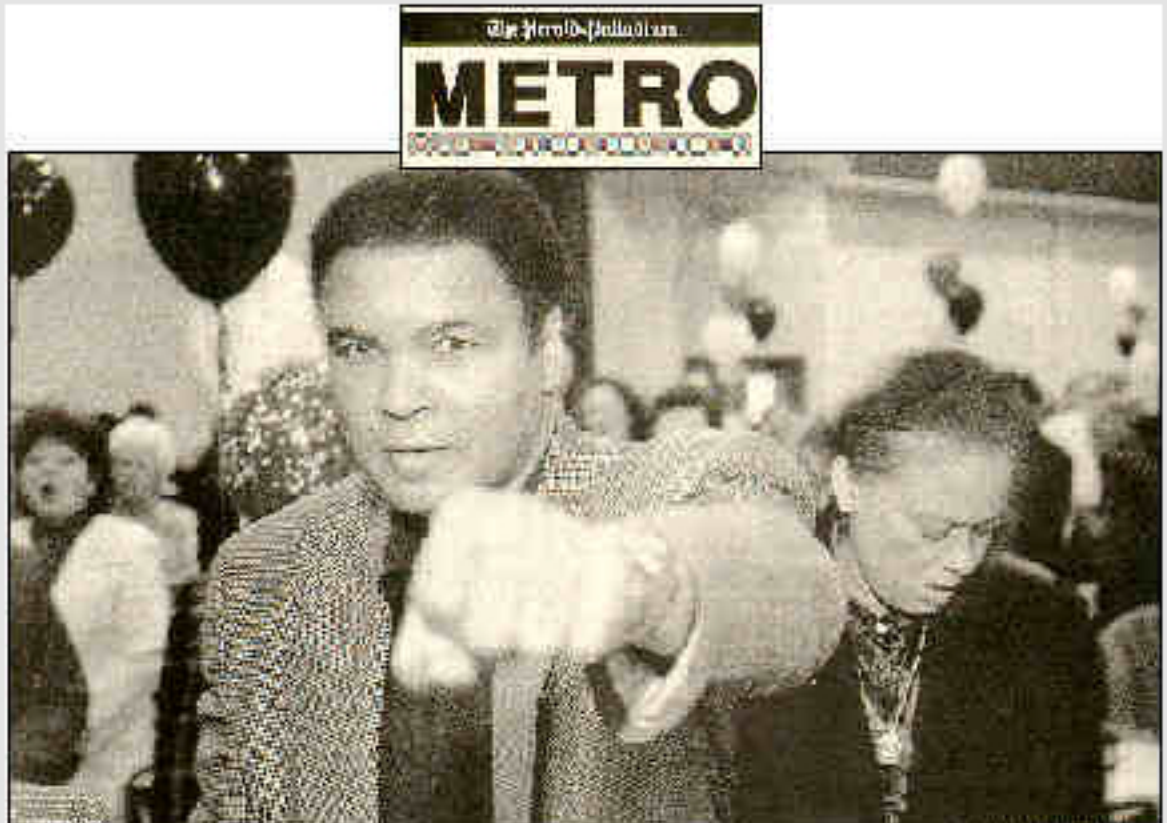
The Soup Kitchen became one of Ali's favourite charities, "because to feed someone hungry was a greater need than any need at our house," Yolanda Ali said.

She introduced a representative of a **Canadian based manufacturer of a vegetarian product, Vita-Pro**, which donated 25,000 meals for the Soup Kitchen next year.

Charles Jespersen, Salvation Army board chairman, said the Soup Kitchen serves about 200 meals a day and 70,000 meals annually. The donation would take care of approximately 30 percent of those meals, he said.

GUEST OF HONOR PACKS A PUNCH:

Former three-time heavy weight champion Muhammad Ali mugs for a photographer Thursday at a dinner put on by Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen and the Salvation Army. Ali his wife, Yolanda, were the guests of honor. The sellout dinner at Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center honored the charities' volunteers and donors.



GUEST OF HONOR PACKS A PUNCH: Former three-time heavy weight champion Muhammad Ali mugs for a photographer Thursday at a dinner put on by the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen and the Salvation Army. Ali's wife, Yolanda, was the guest of honor. The sellout dinner at Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center honored the charities' volunteers and donors.

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By DENISE TACKETT
Staff Writer

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