

Governor's House opened to the public for charity



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BOISE -- On Friday, for the first time the public was welcomed to the "Idaho House" or the yet-to-be occupied Governor's House. The mansion is the former Simplot house off of Bogus Basin Road, which was donated to the state in November 2005 by Jack and Esther Simplot.

The house has been renovated (completed in March 2009) and used for state functions, but Friday was the first time members of the public could come in and look at the famous house.

"It's used for state functions and state dinners and a lot of the agencies use it. It's busy during the legislature," First Lady Lori Otter said. "We're able to open it up tonight for a great cause and let folks come through that have been looking up at the big house on the hill for quite some time now."

The six-hour open house was free, but donations were accepted for the Wyakin Warrior Foundation which helps injured veterans pay for and navigate college.

"I'm glad we waited until now because I can't think of a more worthy cause than what we're doing here today," Governor Butch Otter said.

First Lady Lori Otter has helped remodel the inside of the home and get the house ready for the public. She says a local florist volunteered to help decorate the executive residence for Christmas and the open house. Esther Simplot was in the home earlier in the day, and Lori Otter says she gave the seal of approval.

The Wyakin Warrior Foundation was invited to use the house for a ceremony earlier this year, and the Otters both said they couldn't think of a better organization to for the first public open house.

"To me it's just giving back. They've put themselves on the line. They've come back and had some hardships, and a lot of them severely wounded. It's just a way for us to reach out and really help those that have served," First Lady Lori Otter.

"We feel blessed and honored. We have a hard time believing that we're actually here. :44 It's a beautiful mansion we've been looking at for years and years and years and years," Jeff Bacon, Executive Director of the Wyakin Warrior Foundation, said.

The First Lady says she's planning to do charity open houses twice a year, for Easter and Christmas. The next non-profits are yet to be determined.