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Renovations nearly complete at Vaiden Community Center

By Reggie Ross, Staff Writer

The citizens of Vaiden will not have look any further for a place to hold social gatherings, as work is being completed on its new Community Center.

For over a decade, the old Vaiden High School sat vacant in the middle of town and according to Vaiden Alderwoman Bud Welch, it will soon be put to good use for the town.

According to Welch, the town does not have a place for social gatherings and with the high school nearly abandoned , it can serve as a multi-purpose complex.

The high school, which closed after the 1999 school year, contains a 70x36 auditorium which is equipped with a stage and a seating area.

"I think this is wonderful, and I hope the entire community can use this," Welch said, "I hope that we can bring some community spirit to Vaiden."

Welch said boy scouts, the arts, birthday party rental and reunion rentals have all been designated for the usage of the building. In fact, Welch said someone has already asked to use the building. She said the rentals will be used for utilities on the building.

The community center has become a personal project for Welch and her husband Dennis. The two met in the high school as ninth graders, according to Dennis.

"This school means so much to a lot of people, and we don't want it to just fall apart," Dennis Welch said, "Bud (Welch) is a pusher when it comes to this schoolhouse."

Not yet in a decrepit state, Dennis Welch has spent countless hours making repairs to the auditorium and other areas of the building.

Shattered windows, broken doors and light fixtures have all come to the attention of Dennis Welch over the last several months. Dennis Welch said there were many repairs that were to be made but says the repairs are moving forward.

"We have some work to do on the restrooms, but we've put down new tile and found the correct lighting that the Archives demanded we put together," he said.

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History has set the completion deadline for September 15 on the Center. According to Bud Welch, some setbacks have occurred but he deadline looks as if it will be met.

She said the community has embraced the idea of the center and has played a major role in matching the \$7,500 to go to the center by MDAH.

"We have raised \$7,300 so far in donations from people in former classes and also in-kind donations," Welch said, "We are still asking for any help. Anybody with an extra dime is asked to donate for the community center."

The school, which was completed in 1942, can become something special to the community according to Dennis Welch.

"There are a lot of memories here, and people want to see it continue to stand," he said, "And this is what the community needs, so we will try to have it done."

Vaiden Mayor George Tuberville agrees with the Welch family and said the board of aldermen supports the community center.

"We think this is a great idea and we are behind it 100 percent," Tuberville said, "This has raised a lot of interest in the community."

As the deadline approaches, Bud Welch said the high school is a wonderful building but the "cosmetic stuff" is the focus.

Welch is asking for donation to be sent to the Vaiden City Hall and made out to the Vaiden High School Project.

"With the stage in the building we hope Hill Fire will come and perform for us," Bud Welch wishfully chuckled.