Stands Now a Building

Oh, What a Day it Was! Yes it was, yes it really was.

March 11, 2012 in Chinook, Washington dawned a day so longed for by so many. A grand dedication ceremony, welcoming a newly restored building and many of the people who will use it, helped a community celebrate the realization of a dream. The dream has been to save, renew, restore and rejoice in the historical and beautiful Chinook School and Gymnasium. The dream is to open the doors, the activities and the programs to the folks of our peninsula and beyond. The dream is to serve members of this community in oh so many ways. The dream is to restore community pride in the wonderful buildings once alive, once gone silent, now newly alive.

“We dedicate this beautifully restored building to the community,” said Eileen Wirkkala, chair of the Friends of Chinook School. “We’re thankful for the time, the skills and the financial support that went into saving this building.” And with those words a dream was anchored.

The dedication ceremony for the Chinook Gymnasium brought together local dignitaries, dedicated planners, designers, laborers and the people waiting to celebrate the official opening. There were speeches, walls of pictures, spiffed-up nooks to explore and wonderful foods to share from the new kitchen. Nearly 300 community members filled the shiny new space to revel in such an accomplishment and share in the dream. Those in attendance enjoyed a printed program of the ceremony and recognition of major contributors. FOCS has included here a copy of that program for each of our members reading this newsletter. We want all members to get a renewed sense of what a wonderful thing this community is experiencing and to have a record of the dreamers who drive so much of the forward action. The contributors listed in your program showcase the broad-based dedication to the dream. But, let it not be lost that we recognize the importance of the entire community of contributors large and small and well-wishers all.

This community kept the wind at the backs of the planners and the doers, and we thank you.

We would also like to share some of what the Chinook Observer had to say and encourage you to visit our website www.friendsofchinookschool.org to enjoy an array of pictures and a review of the celebration. Our local newspapers encouraged us with wonderful words: “A beauty, back from the brink” (Butterfield headline in the Chinook Observer) and from the Daily Astorian, “Restorations of historic buildings begin as acts of faith. The Friends have reason to be proud. They are accomplishing a very significant task.” If you missed the original articles, check online at: chinookobserver.com/search.

Stands Yet an Opportunity

Where to now the dream? We have much to share in this newsletter about current uses of our new space and plans for the next phases to begin.

“Next goal for the Friends is restoration of the schoolhouse. That will be a great triumph for the picturesque town of Chinook, and a significant cultural amenity for all the people of south Pacific County.” (Daily Astorian Editorial) Indeed!
FROM THE FOCS BOARD

1921 Gymnasium Floor Restored

With grant funds previously awarded to the Port of Chinook from the Washington State Heritage Capital Projects Fund and matching funds provided by Friends of Chinook School, construction has resumed on the gymnasium.

Project Manager Corky Wilson supervised the beautiful restoration work of the gymnasium floor. The floor was brought back to its original beauty by John Osborn, owner, A Higher Plane (pictured below). Mr. Osborn resides in the Seattle area and has had years of experience refinishing floors throughout the country. More about the gym floor restoration and Mr. Osborn will appear in our next newsletter.

The next project for the gym includes insulation of the floor and ceiling and exterior painting. This work is funded and should be completed by fall.

School Building Construction

Thanks to a generous grant from a local foundation and funds from Friends of Chinook School, the school building roof will soon be replaced. The next goal is to raise funds to restore existing windows (replacing where necessary) and new doors. Additional plans include repair to exterior walls and painting. Once that work is complete, interior improvements will be made. The project to restore the school building will take time and we will need your continued financial and volunteer help. Please contact us for information about the project and let us know how you might help (pictures next column).

2013 CALENDAR

Be ready now! FOCS is offering a wonderful new calendar for 2013. We again will have a 13-month calendar, this time featuring historic houses of Chinook. The 2013 calendar features modern day images of historical homes. Several have been here for 100 years or more. These homes carry on the tradition of expert building and residents’ caretaking. The 2013 calendar will be available at the 2012 Oktoberfest on October 20th. FOCS is excited to share the beautiful photos with our community.

HONORED ALUMNI

A memorable part of the recent dedication ceremony came when FOCS Vice President, Loma Billups, read the names of Chinook School Alumni. Starting with the Class of 1931, Loma read through the class of 1943. Those who were able to attend stood as the crowd cheered.

Class of ’31 Ernestine (Belknap) Litschke
Class of ’32 Jim Mechals
Class of ’35 Cornelia (Olsen) Baker
Don Mechals
Harlan Olsen
Korine (Anderson) Nelson
Class of ’36 Rose (Robinson) Patterson
Class of ’37 Lee Timmen
Cecelia Gardlin
Class of ’38 Mary Jane (Nelson) Ward
Class of ’39 Oscar Eager (Valedictorian)
Kenneth Jernstrom, Sr.
Class of ’40 Dan Olsen
Class of ’41 Loren Johnson
Class of ’42 Mary Chloe (Williams) Lovvold
Wallace (Buddy) Osborne
Class of ’43 Roberta (Leback) Tetz
Virginia (Benson) Wisner

PICTURES PLEASE!

FOCS Board Members Karen Leu and Jill Wirkkala ask that you contact them if you have pictures of “Chinook School Days”. Karen and Jill were responsible for the wonderful picture gallery on display at the Gymnasium Dedication.

Karen: 206-713-6981  alkileu@comcast.net
Jill: 360-244-1414  jilliank@centurytel.net

NEW BOARD MEMBER

The Friends of Chinook School Board is pleased to announce that Jill Wirkkala has been appointed to fill out the term left open by Carol Johnson’s passing. Jill is a proud graduate of Chinook School and currently works with FOCS on rental readiness at Chinook School Events Center. Welcome aboard, Jill. We look forward to adding your expertise as we work toward restoration of the main school building.

FOCS Annual Board Meeting

June 18, 2012 6:00 p.m.
Chinook Gym
Memorials

Monetary donations since the January newsletter have been received in memory of:

TIM C. WILLIAMS
HOWARD ELDON DAVID WILLIAMS
ERVIN EVAN WILLIAMS
ELSIE B. (MECHALS) ANDERSON
TROPHY HUGHES
JOSEPH Q. CHURCH
CAROL D. JOHNSON
RHODA (TIMMEN) HUGHES
LUKE H. JENSEN
WALTER L. HANSEN

OKTOBERFEST 2012!

Now that our wonderful new gymnasium is completed and serving the community, we are set to begin work on restoring the main school building. Part of that effort is funded with the successful annual Oktoberfest “Chinook Style”.

Mark your calendars for Oktoberfest 2012 on Saturday, October 20th at the Chinook Gymnasium. We are proud to share a scrumptious meal, lively music and exciting auction. Come enjoy a terrific evening as you support the rehabilitation project of Chinook School by buying great art, jewelry, travel packages and more at the Oktoberfest auction. And, the Wine Raffle is back!

If you would like to donate an item for the auction we will be collecting them in September. Come join your friends at the best party of the year! Donations? Email information or questions to alikikaren@comcast.net

Monetary donations since the January newsletter have been received in memory of:

TIM C. WILLIAMS
HOWARD ELDON DAVID WILLIAMS
ERVIN EVAN WILLIAMS
ELSIE B. (MECHALS) ANDERSON
TROPHY HUGHES
JOSEPH Q. CHURCH
CAROL D. JOHNSON
RHODA (TIMMEN) HUGHES
LUKE H. JENSEN
WALTER L. HANSEN

A very special donation was made by Loren Johnson in memory of the children of Lester & Eleda Johnson.

EDNA (JOHNSON) ROBINSON
EARL JOHNSON
C. ROBERT JOHNSON
CATHERINE (JOHNSON) MONTGOMERY
L. LEROY JOHNSON
CAROL D. JOHNSON

With this newsletter we pay tribute to our good friend and board member, Carol Johnson. Carol was a founding member of the Friends of Chinook School Board and served as our Historian. She was a talented artist and drew the logo for our letterhead as well as many cartoons for the newsletter. She was a dear person and is missed by many who had the pleasure of knowing her.

CHINOOK FOOD BANK

The philosophy of “waste not, want not” was in part a guide as we determined to never waste our historically significant school buildings. Now, on a smaller scale within the walls of the Chinook School we apply “waste not, want not” to our newest commitment of service to the community, a community food bank.

It is so exciting to report that the new food bank, serving our community from the Chinook School, is doing an amazing job. Friends of Chinook School and a cadre of community volunteers are working hard to ensure food supplies (and extras when available) for those who need the support. We are all part of a greater community and happy we are able help remedy hunger in our area. With direct food support from Northwest Harvest and Coastal Harvest we have been able to stock the freezers and shelves. Please know we welcome donations of shelf stable foods and offers of fresh and frozen items as space permits. Monetary donations are also most helpful and are used to make purchases of foods in short supply. To inquire about needs you might be able to fill, contact Tammy Engel at 360-244-2448 or tammy.engel@gmail.com

The Chinook Food Bank operates for three hours the first and third Wednesday of each month. Currently the doors are open from 10:00 to 1:00. The Ilwaco Food Bank operates the second and fourth Friday of each month. This alternating schedule allows people the opportunity to visit a food bank weekly.
One of the most exciting developments at the Chinook School Events Center is the newly organized building rental system. FOCS has organized a rental system with rules of conduct and people to schedule and organize events as well as staff to prepare and maintain the building. The inviting building is nearly 6,000 square feet on four acres of land. The restored space includes an enlarged kitchen, stage with dressing rooms and updated restrooms. The building is ADA accessible but maintains its 1920’s charm.

There have been many successful rentals over this last year: Reunions, weddings, community celebrations, family gatherings, musical entertainments and a Jr/Sr prom. Filling special calendar slots alongside the personal rentals are community events open to all. We schedule open gym (managed by local volunteers), the Oktoberfest fundraiser, the Halloween party for local children, and more. This well-designed facility lends itself to an amazing array of events. Such a wonderful space!

To inquire about renting the facility, we encourage you to go to www.friendsofchinookschool.org to check availability for your date on the website calendar. You will also find a description of the space and what is included in the fee schedule.

If the date you desire is available, please contact John Billups at 360-244-FOCS (3627) or email him at jbillups000@centurytel.net to request a site visit. When your signed agreement and deposit check are received, your booking will be secured.