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A Community Effort



Mr. Mohr's shop class of boys (from left) Merritt Eastman, Tanner Medich, Landon Furne, Cade Connell and Isaak Cole load the old theatre seats onto a trailer as part of a volunteer effort to make way for new seats.



Tom Dennis (inside door), John Phillips, Jerry Preston, the FedEx driver and Doug Todd unload the new seats from the truck. Several volunteers dropped everything to help.

New Theatre Seats Realized With Donations, Help From Residents

After being closed for two weekends in December, The Rialto Theatre will re-open this weekend to unveil its new seating. The wide, high-back reclining seats with cup holders arrived via FedEx last week from Mexico, and for Rialto Theatre Board treasurer Pat Turley, the week was a whirlwind of activity.

Raising money for the seats started only at the end of last September. Pat, who spearheaded fundraising, said she received the last check donation on the day the seats arrived, sealing the deal that the \$20,000.00 project was 100 percent paid for.

Pat said in a community such as Arnold, and with great support for the theatre, raising the money wasn't difficult. She put the word out in the newspaper, encouraging individuals to purchase a seat for \$250.00. She made personal contacts to individuals and businesses, and the SORC stepped in and made a generous donation. As word got

out, she was approached on the street with offers of donations.

Support of the project wasn't just monetary. Pat needed plenty of help as the time drew near for the seats to be installed.

APS Industrial Arts teacher Clay Mohr brought in his shop class to remove and load the old seats, grind off the chair bolts and fill in the holes in the floor. Theatre Board President Connie Nansel and her sister Bonnie Weismann then painted the floor.

Just as Pat thought everything was going smoothly, FedEx arrived with the large shipment of 80 seats, and the driver asked her who was going to unload them. She said no one told her what to expect when the shipment came.

"I assumed FedEx would do the unloading," she said. "I made three phone calls and within five minutes, I had all the help I needed."

The village office sent over Doug Todd and the loader, the

school sent Ruth Tullis and Jerry Preston, and a call to Mighty Mart resulted in a coffee group of Eric Nelson, Mo Sanford, John Phillips, Jim Weinman and Tom Dennis coming over.

During installation by Roger Bockert and crew of Heartland Theatre Services, empty boxes began mounting and needed cut down, flattened and recycled. Pat said Gary Larreau and his crew of Doug De Laune and Mike Nelson came to her rescue. These guys were the first to try out the seats and gave them a big thumbs-up for comfort.

"I am simply overwhelmed and amazed that the community just gave so much to the theatre," said Pat. "Roger (Bockert) couldn't believe we got all the money that fast."

A plaque with a list of donors who helped purchase a seat will be placed in the theatre's lobby to commemorate this achievement in the theatre's restoration.



Doug De Laune, Gary Larreau and Mike Nelson stepped in to flatten and recycle the big pile of boxes left after installation of the seats.

Happy New Year!



Hornung Reflects on 29 Years Shaping Education



Jane Hornung receives a plaque from Mid-Plains Community College President Ryan Purdy on Wednesday night during her final MPCC Board of Governors meeting. Hornung has served on the board for the past 29 years. (Courtesy photo)

It was a good time to leave. That's how Jane Hornung felt about stepping away from the Mid-Plains Community College Board of Governors after 29 years of continuous service.

"I think the board is in a good place," said Hornung, of Arnold. "I feel like I can leave them and they will behave themselves when I'm gone. The leadership at the college is stronger than it's ever been."

Hornung's incumbency made her the longest continuously serving member on the board. That service was recognized Wednesday night during the last meeting Hornung will ever sit in on as a governor. She decided not to seek another term, mostly because she was no longer comfortable driving long distances at night to attend meetings.

It was by happenstance that Hornung even ended up on the board. She was appointed to it in 1985 to finish out the term of a District 3 representative from Broken Bow who had resigned. "My husband saw the opening advertised in a newspaper, and thought I might be interested," said Hornung.

She responded to the ad - not because she needed something to do, as Hornung was already teaching and had children at home who were 6, 7, 15 and 16, but because of her background.

"I was experienced in vocational education," said Hornung. "I also thought I had enough knowledge in higher education to be able to articulate

late ideas." She got the job and served out a year-long term. Hornung then decided to run for an elected seat on the board, which she won in 1986. "I wanted to continue with the board because I still felt there was a need for input from local

educators," said Hornung. "I felt like I was the spokeswoman for the needs of rural clientele."

Over the years, she worked for Educational Service Unit 16 then served as superintendent of Paxton Consolidated Schools and, later on, of Arthur County Schools.

"My job experience allowed me to talk to the board about the needs of smaller schools," Hornung said. "I brought up things that were lacking that the college could help with. I also pointed out areas in the high schools where curriculum fell short because that could potentially impact the success of future college students."

She counted MPCC's partnership with Union Pacific Railroad, progress in dual credit courses and expansion of the nursing program among the highlights during her tenure on the board. Hornung will always believe MPCC plays a vital role in rural Nebraska. Her husband and children all took courses through the college, and she participated in recreational classes there.

"We don't have any four-year institutions in our area, but we do have business and labor needs," said Hornung. "It increases the wealth of our area and the state for our people to receive the same opportunities as if they lived in an urban location."

Although she left the board on her own accord, it wasn't with

out some heartache.

"I will miss being informed," said Hornung. "I will miss the opportunity to learn and to be a part of the progress of this school."

She did not, however, turn her back on MPCC. Hornung plans to spend her free time taking classes at the college and keeping tabs on the Board of Governors, even if it's from a distance.

"I will call and bug them about decisions they are making and will pull up the Freedom of Information Act and make copies of everything presented," Hornung said. "Most importantly, I will ask questions and make remarks an ordinary citizen has the right to."

MPCC President Ryan Purdy offered the following comment about Hornung's departure.

"Jane helped shape MPCC into what it has become today," Purdy said. "She was always thinking ahead to 'what's next.' She saw the big picture and always had a student-first mindset. Her history and leadership at the local and state level from the last 29 years will be missed."