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## White Lake project draws praise, nearly done

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For Doc Smith, the White Lake school construction project will always have a special place on his resume, and in his heart.

Smith, the construction manager for EDS Builders, is guiding the work on the new community recreation center, with an eye on turning the facility and gymnasium over to the school within weeks, well in advance of the Laker basketball season.

"This building fits White Lake," Smith says. "It's not too fancy, but it's nice. In the years to come, it's going to be an anchor for the town and help grow community pride."

That special "fit" between the school, community and builder started well before the April groundbreaking, during the brainstorming by an ad hoc committee on what the community wanted, needed and would support, and through a successful \$3 million referendum in November.

It became evident even more clearly when White Lake residents—some of whom admittedly voted against the plan—anted up again and donated valuable hard maple logs for the gymnasium's floor. Smith said those donations were key to allowing upgrades, with the standard high school floor replaced by a college-level playing surface by the locally-based Robbins Flooring.

"The youngsters will be playing on that floor by the end of the month," Smith predicted as crews began laying the subflooring last week.

Indeed the entire project has proceeded at a remarkably smooth pace, Smith said, again a reflection on the level of commitment on the part of the community and the crews involved in the project.

"This has been a very quick project," he said. "It hasn't been a typical 9 to 5 job for these guys. They put in the long hours and got the job done right. It's pride in the job."

The fairly pain-free construction has also left some dollars to handle last-minute contingencies, Smith said, with \$5,000 to \$10,000 already set aside.

"We're under budget and we're setting aside money for future unknowns," he said.

White Lake School has also used the construction as an educational tool. During the school year Smith has regularly left his construction trailer to meet with classes on the project and various areas related to the construction field, and interns with ties to the district, Joe Leaver and Kelsey Gallagher, are getting "hands-on" experience during the construction.

The project has also attracted the attention of communities outside of White Lake, with visitors from Shawano, Antigo and other schools coming for a look.

"They are all very pleased," Smith said. "You can see the workmanship."

Smith said that from the initial planning and vote through the log donations and now nearing completion, the involvement of the entire community has been key. When some adults raised concerns about the large windows in the fitness center, worried about people looking in during the evening hours, crews quickly executed a change order that replaced the clear panes with glass block, which are actually more attractive. When crews were preparing to paint the building's exterior to match initial plans, the community, liking the attractive walls, said no, and the project was stopped.



**A worker high above the floor of the new White Lake school gymnasium, which is nearing completion.**

And Smith admitted to knowing that people have been “sneaking in” to get their first looks at the gymnasium, and maybe try to shoot a few baskets.

“This has really been like an old-fashioned barn-raising,” Smith said. ‘It’s gone up fast because everybody cares about it. This should be an example for any community that wants to do a building right.”

The project, which was approved by 60 percent of voters in a November referendum, includes a central recreational center, similar to a commons, an exercise room that may also be used as a community space, men’s and women’s locker rooms and restrooms, team locker rooms and the expansive new gymnasium.

There is also a concession area and remodeling to the existing shop and locker rooms.

“I love it,” Smith said. “This is the way America should be built.”