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White Lake



Bill Gamble and Cap Buettner wield an extra-large pair of scissors for the ceremonial ribbon-cutting at the White Lake School Monday afternoon.

celebrates 'Laker Pride'

Nov. 20, 2012

Capping a day of "Laker pride" in the community, White Lake inaugurated its new college-style gymnasium with a win Monday evening.

District officials had vowed following the successful November, 2011 referendum that the new recreation center and gymnasium would be ready for the first Laker home basketball game, and they easily made the deadline after an unprecedented year of work that shined a positive light on the school and entire community.

From the opening strains of the White Lake High School Band playing Journey's "Don't Stop Believing" to Kris Gallagher and Luke Wickersheim making the first "official" basketball shot, the afternoon program was a celebration of everything that speakers stressed made White Lake so special. The qualities ranged from the willingness of the community to ante up for students during an era where referendums in much larger and more prosperous areas routinely fail to landowners providing the logs and the local Robbins Flooring the expertise to create perhaps the finest gymnasium court in the region.

"White Lake, you showed them how to do it right," Dan Wickersheim and Beth Castaldi representing the Community Advisory Task Force, said, stressing what a privilege it was to be a member of a community "willing to invest in our kids."

"We hope the students here today remember the excitement they are feeling during this ceremony, and how the project was accomplished," Castaldi said. "We're proud to live in a community where the young, the old and the in-between are all happy to say 'We are Lakers'."

"This is second to none, this community and this facility," Wickersheim added.

The program opened with Administrator Bill Fisher offering a multitude of thanks, acknowledging everyone from the board of education and community advisory panels to Construction Manager Earl "Doc" Smith, the contractors, and especially the community.

He spoke of the characterization of the project as a "barn raising."

"It's the strengthening of relationships, of people coming together for a common cause," he said. "This is a recognition and celebration of the White Lake spirit."

That spirit resonated through the speeches.

"We have a beautiful facility here and will for many years to come," Board President Scott Popelka said, telling students, "I hope you take pride in the facility. Take that White Lake spirit and spread it, spread it like fire."

State Senator-Elect Tom Tiffany brought congratulations from Madison, calling it "truly heartwarming" to see a community such as White Lake come together for students, and Chris Berry representing the Building Advisory Committee applauded the community "for making this happen."

The community and students also welcomed back the popular former Principal Bob McCune, who said

he was thrilled with the improvements.

"It's been a complete joy and I miss you every day," he said.

In his remarks, Smith reflected on the unique aspects of the projects and its frugality thanks to the donations and support of local and regional businesses, and presented a series of plaques to some of those involved.

"Sometimes I feel like a gypsy. You get done with a project and you move on," Smith said. "But part of me will always be in White Lake. Thank you for letting me into your lives."

Fisher and school secretary Georgia Heistad presented Smith with a poster of students and staff.

Closing remarks came from Sandi Gallagher, school board clerk, who was joined by board member Jayne McCarthy.

"Use it, but don't abuse it," Gallagher said. "Take time to appreciate it."

Gallagher hearkened back to the ground-breaking ceremony in April, when she said she was looking forward to shooting the first basket in the new gymnasium. Instead, she deferred that honor to a couple members of the Laker squad.

"These guys can do the first shot," she said. "Play ball."