



Then and Now

Curb Appeal Needs Friends

Hey, I'm so excited! I have a whole new bunch of friends, "Friends of the Community Center."

This is a group of people committed to preserving and making the community center more useable and sustainable.

Most of the Friends went to school there. I did not. My three children did. But, I do have an extended and varied history with the community center.

I was on the Stillwater Board of Education for 13 years while it was a junior high school building. When ownership changed to the City of Stillwater, I was appointed to a board without a budget that governed the building and tried to make it better. During this time the Lowry family gifted the center with half a million dollars, so we could remodel the west wing. That required meeting every two weeks and sometimes weekly.

In addition, I have been singing with the Stillwater Community Singers for about 20 years. We have met there every Thursday evening. I figure I've put in enough hours to be a graduate of the old junior high school.

The Winfrey Houston Theater – formerly known as the auditorium – has always been a big part of the community center. Before the high school built its fine arts building, every big community event was held in this theater.

My daughter was Annie in Annie Get Your Gun. Both girls were in other plays and my son, Jon, performed in a tutu with the junior high basketball team.

I remember when the high school did Fiddler on the Roof. It was sold out for three continuous nights and you had to have a ticket. We went to dance recitals there before my girls were even old enough to take dance lessons.

The theater has been everything.

Long, long ago I was in a show that a traveling music man put together in a week and had the show on Saturday night. It was all adults. He brought the costumes and the stage props. Local people performed and made the music. They sold tickets and the Sheerar Center received the money that was left over after the music man was paid.

My family enjoyed Michael Martin Murphy at Christmas. We have seen balance-act people stack chairs to the ceiling, watched Irish dancers and the opera Barber of Seville – all in the theater.

So, when the architect from Texas pointed out to me that they were going to demolish the theater and make it into a water retention area, I said, "What?!"

After that, Friends of the Community Center was formed. We have completed one project – a remodel of the dining room. Our second project is to improve the curb appeal of the building.

We have removed the overgrown shrubs and unsightly vents, painted a lot of the outside trim and flagpole, put up new lights with more repairs and upgrades to do.

To accomplish all of this, we need more money donated to the Stillwater Community Center Foundation.

We need more friends and more work days.

We need you!



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Jim Baker is a Stillwater Community Center Foundation member and local veterinarian for 50 years. He is also an avid photographer who often has photographs hanging in the lobby and hallways of the Community Center.

The Stillwater Community Center Foundation and the Friends of Stillwater Community Center strive to provide supplemental resources for the Stillwater Community Center to ensure its accessibility, affordability and sustainability for its use by residents and visitors of Stillwater and surrounding area. Visit www.sccfriends.com for more information.

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