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Beloit Memorial refreshes image with paint, upgrades

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By Ashley Rhodebeck
arhodebeck@beloitdailynews.com

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\$30,000 given for the school's upgrades

Monetary donations from Beloit Memorial High School alumni this summer helped give the school fresh coats of paint and a more professional image for the start of the 2009-10 school year.

The School District of Beloit recognized the group that made it possible during the Board of Education's business meeting Tuesday.

"This is a humble group," said Melissa Badger, coordinator of community and school relations. "Their commitment, their enthusiasm is undeniable."

The Visit Beloit First Impressions Committee began a fundraising campaign this spring seeking funding to complete \$100,000 in upgrades it identified during a tour earlier this year.

It mailed appeals to 17,000 alumni from the Class of 2000 and older.

The Stateline Community Foundation, which handled the donations, received thousands of cards with funds totaling about \$30,000.

Executive Director Tara Tinder said many came with notes, such as one from a man who recalled installing the floor in the old high school because the rest of the men were fighting in World War II.

"You have people from around the country giving to this," she said, noting some haven't lived in Beloit for decades.

Committee spokesperson Ann Shea explained the group formed a few years ago after acknowledging how first impressions relate to economic development in a community.

"A first impression in a community is often a last impression," she said.

Committee members agreed schools greatly affect a family's decision to move to a city, so freshening the high school's look could only be beneficial, Shea said.

"I knew as a parent there is a lot to offer at Beloit Memorial once you get in the doors," she said.

The group identified several areas for improvement, including the Barkin Arena, main entrance and signs.

"There's still a long way to go, but it's been truly a great public-private partnership," Shea said. "I'm really proud of what's been done so far."

The group has upgraded lighting, painted interior and exterior doors purple, ordered benches for the Barkin Arena entrance and installed carpet tiles and a reception desk in the main entrance.

"I know I've been driving by and noticing the changes that have been happening," board President Michael Ramsdail said. "It looks awesome."

Other board members agreed.

"It really does lift the spirits," Tia Johnson said. "I think the students will go in with a positive attitude as well."

"A school that one can take pride in is an asset to every one of our students," John Acomb said.

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