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Monday, Jan. 29, 2024
Section C

ROCHELLE
News-Leader

Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024
Section 3

REMEMBER WHEN

Pegasus Special Riders hosts grand reopening event

BY JEFF HELFRICH
MANAGING EDITOR

OREGON — On Friday, May 12, a grand reopening and ribbon cutting event was held at Pegasus Special Riders in Oregon following the structure completion of its arena.

The facilities at Pegasus Special Riders sustained storm damage twice last year, halting its operations. The nonprofit, located at 6668 S. Carthage Road near Oregon, has been operating since 1997. It's a therapeutic riding program for children and adults with special needs. Volunteers perform all of the required duties, such as working with the riders, caring for the horses and facilities, raising funds and providing the necessary administrative support.

The damage on Aug. 28, 2022 included the facility's loafing shed for its horses and severe damage to a storage building.

Back on March 5, 2022, a windstorm severely damaged the main arena building. High winds tore off about 120 feet of canopy, twisted the steel frame and the large front door was blown off and landed inside of the arena.

Pegasus Special Riders has been unable to perform any rides since the storm damage and was dealing with pandemic restrictions before that. The nonprofit worked on cleanup, construction and dealt with insurance providers over the past year. The damage in March was over \$300,000.

"This has taken a long time," PSR Board President Donna Fellows said. "We still have a lot to do. We're moving forward because we now have a covered arena again and an outdoor arena to have lessons if the weather is nice. We don't have all the electric work done or any water yet. Electric is what we're waiting for, so we can have water, fans and



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

On Friday, May 12, a grand reopening and ribbon cutting event was held at Pegasus Special Riders in Oregon following the structure completion of its arena.

lights. Other than that, the building is good to go. We thought we'd be further along, but here we are."

The Oregon Chamber

of Commerce attended Friday's events and congratulated PSR on its grand reopening. Fellows said equine activities will

resume starting on June 6-7. An outdoor arena will be used if the indoor arena isn't all the way completed by that time.

PSR's funding is nearly completely made up of donations.

See RIDERS page 3

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REMEMBER WHEN



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

The facilities at Pegasus Special Riders sustained storm damage twice last year, halting its operations. The nonprofit, located at 6668 S. Carthage Road near Oregon, has been operating since 1997. It's a therapeutic riding program for children and adults with special needs.

RIDERS: Grand reopening and ribbon cutting held in May 2023

From page 2

"We've had wonderful people that have helped," Fellows said. "It's been volunteers and people that are willing to just help us out. We've had contractors that have helped us out. That was wonderful. It's overwhelming,

because what you thought you were going to have to spend and what actual cost is, it's been yards away. And if you have the funds to do it, then you don't have the materials. But we've been blessed with contributions and help. It's been a work of love and contributions."

PSR has seen donations come from Rockford, Sterling, Wisconsin and "all over," Fellows said.

"We've had people that donated and we didn't even know who they were," Fellows said. "I don't even know how they found out about it.

It's been wonderful to know that people are out there that want to help us do our job for the people that need to have our services."

Fellows called the feeling of being able to offer rides and equine services again "heartwarming."

"We've waited for three

years with COVID-19 and everything else," Fellows said. "We've been very anxious to be able to get things done. We have volunteers that are waiting and calling and asking when the rides will start. We have students and their parents calling. We fill a need that unless

you have a challenged individual close to you, you don't even know about. I say sometimes that we're the best-kept secret in Ogle County. I just want to thank all of the people that have contributed to us all these years and especially during this disaster."

REMEMBER WHEN

Groundbreaking ceremony held for joint fire training facility

BY JEFF HELFRICH
MANAGING EDITOR

ROCHELLE — In September, a groundbreaking ceremony was held for the Rochelle Fire Department and Ogle-Lee Fire Protection District's new joint training facility at 920 S. Main St.

Construction of the facility has and will consist of four phases. The first phase was land acquisition. The South Main Street site was donated to the city by Rochelle Main Street, LCC after officials had searched for sites across months. The second phase will consist of grading, construction of water retention, two concrete pads, an asphalt parking lot, two metal training structures specifically designed for live fire, and landscaping.

The planning for phases one and two are complete and construction is set to begin in the next few days, RFD Chief Dave Sawls-ville said Wednesday.

The future third phase

will include the construction of a third concrete pad and the erecting of a four-story metal training structure to simulate a multi-story commercial or residential building that is also designed and built for live fire. Phase four will be construction of a brick & mortar building to house a classroom, reserve engines and breakout rooms for training.

"The path to today involved hours and hours of planning, conversation, cooperation and collaboration," Sawlsville said. "I would like to send a heartfelt thank you to everyone who played a part in that process. Thanks to all of you for taking time to celebrate not only our progress, but the relationships that helped get us here."

Costs for the project will be split 50-50 between the City of Rochelle and the OLFPD. The OLFPD is made up of stations in Hillcrest, Flagg Center, Creston and Steward.



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

In September, a groundbreaking ceremony was held for the Rochelle Fire Department and Ogle-Lee Fire Protection District's new joint training facility at 920 S. Main St.

The two organizations have partnered to provide emergency services to the area for a number of years.

"We're here for a very

special occasion for a project that has been on the drawing board for many years in different forms," Rochelle Mayor

John Bearrows said. "The collaborative effort between the Ogle-Lee Fire Protection District and the City of Rochelle has

been amazing. It's a great blessing for the city and the OLFPD.

See FACILITY page 5

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FACILITY: Rochelle and OLFPD celebrate completion of new project

From page 4

The ultimate winner of this merger was the residents of our community. Not only Rochelle, but the surrounding communities of Creston, Steward, Flagg Center, Hillcrest and everybody that's protected by the district."

Bearrows spoke about the importance of high-quality training and equipment for emergency services, which is what the joint training facility aims to ensure.

"The ultimate goal of the city and the OLFPD is to make sure that each of our personnel goes home to their families at night," Bearrows said. "We can't do that without making sure that we provide all of the tools and training that they need. I'm so proud of this project. Once it's done, it'll be something that we can be proud of for decades to come. And it's because of the support of our city council and city manager and staff. We appreciate it

very much."

OLFPD Board of Trustees Chairman Lance Noggle spoke at the groundbreaking event and thanked the city for its partnership and board members that started the partnership to begin with.

He said the training facility idea has been worked on for many years by many levels of leadership in the local firefighting community. He thanked those that work on the front lines most of all.

"They're the ones that run into the calls on your worst day," Noggle said. "And hopefully this training facility will help them get educated more. A special tool for them is education and they will be able to do their job and return home to their families safely, and that's the ultimate thing we want."

City Manager Jeff Fiegenschuh spoke at the event as well and said the 12.06 acres of property will serve as more than a fire training facility. It will be

able to host training opportunities for Rochelle Municipal Utilities, other city departments and possible state and national organizations such as the American Public Power Association and the Illinois Municipal Utilities Association.

The city manager said the driving force behind the joint training facility project was getting a top-notch facility for RFD firefighters, paid on-call and volunteer firefighters of the OLFPD, and all city personnel, to train and prepare.

"As a city manager and a taxpayer, I am proud to know our team will have access to additional training that allows them to hone their skills and continue their important job of saving lives and keeping our community moving forward," Fiegenschuh said. "I can honestly say this project is one of the favorites that I've had the honor of working on and one of the best collaborations between multiple



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

Mayor John Bearrows spoke about the importance of high-quality training and equipment for emergency services, which is what the joint training facility aims to ensure.

local agencies I've seen in my 20 years as a city manager."

Fiegenschuh thanked the mayor, city council and OLFPD board for their support of the project, along with the Ogle County Board for its donation of \$50,000 in American Rescue Plan Act funds for the joint training facility.

"I want to recognize and thank Chief Sawlsville and his team at RFD," Fiegenschuh said. "Our fire department is the best

in the state. These men and women work hard to keep us safe. We look forward to several ribbon cuttings in the future to promote and showcase what will be the premier fire training facility in Northern Illinois."

Sawlsville said that the best method towards developing exceptionally-skilled emergency service is the same as developing exceptional skill in any other field: Practice.

"Having the ability to go through the reps and prac-

tice the same thing continuously over and over again, it becomes second nature," Sawlsville said. "And that way, when something out of the ordinary happens, you can think through it and make critical decisions. And that's what this facility represents. A place where new skills are introduced. And now with a designated place to practice, those new skills become ingrained, existing skills are revisited and revised to represent best practice."

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REMEMBER WHEN

Ribbon cutting ceremony held for Sarah Phelps Community Plaza

BY GEORGE HOWE
CORRESPONDENT

OREGON — On a warm, sunny picturesque fall Saturday afternoon Sept. 30, the long-anticipated ribbon cutting ceremony took place for the new Sarah Phelps Community Plaza. Government officials, civic leaders and local organizations gathered at the site of the old Harvest Bank Drive-Up located at Fifth and Washington Streets in Oregon.

The property was originally purchased five years ago and phase one of the project was to create public washrooms and move the John Phelps kitchen from the west end of town from the old Phelps farmstead to the other end of the property. The kitchen building is part of a brick shed that dates back to the 1860s.

Phelps is given credit for establishing the City of Oregon, where he built a Saw Mill by the Rock River on Pine Creek, and along the way erected the first double

log cabin in 1836 and frame house in 1838. According to records, Phelps stated that his wife Sarah was a very exemplary woman, and her kindness of disposition endeared her to many.

A combination of donated funds, including \$7,500 from the Illinois Realtor's Association, grants and ARPA funding totaling approximately \$60,000 helped complete the project that had a price tag of around \$80,000.

The interior of the building has been renovated with a sink and refrigerator that can be used by the public for events and special occasions. The new green space in the heart of downtown features a beautiful assortment of flowers, plants and trees. Picnic tables with umbrellas, chess and checker stations and benches will provide a comfortable setting where residents, visitors and families can have lunch or gather for an outing.

City Manager Darin DeHaan was the emcee and welcomed and thanked



(PHOTO BY GEORGE HOWE)

On a warm, sunny picturesque fall Saturday afternoon Sept. 30, the long-anticipated ribbon cutting ceremony took place for the new Sarah Phelps Community Plaza.

many individuals and organizations including the Lions and Rotary Clubs who volunteered to help assemble the tables and

benches. He also explained the process for picking out the foliage.

"We worked with our city tree board and Hage-

mann Horticulture who are here in town to make sure that we have the right flowers, plants and trees that will provide color and

shade while also being able to handle the weather elements," DeHaan said.

See PLAZA page 7



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(PHOTOS BY GEORGE HOWE)

The new green space in the heart of downtown features a beautiful assortment of flowers, plants and trees. Picnic tables with umbrellas, chess and checker stations and benches will provide a comfortable setting where residents, visitors and families can have lunch or gather for an outing. The Rotary of Oregon dedicated a bench marking the 85th year as a club. The Lion's Club named a bench in honor of longtime member and former President Dave Stenger who passed away this past spring.

PLAZA: September ribbon cutting ceremony held in Oregon

From page 6

John Lindhorst of Oregon Together, a grassroots community planning organization, also shared a vision for the plaza.

"It was just awesome

working with the city to really make this a reality," Lindhorst said. "As a result, this is above and beyond what we expected."

A couple of dedications also took place.

The Rotary of Oregon dedicated a bench marking the 85th year as a club. The Lion's Club named a bench in honor of longtime member and former President Dave Stenger who passed away

this past spring.

"We wish to dedicate this bench for all to enjoy and to remember this great man," current Lion's President Lori Peterson said.

Mayor Ken Williams

spoke to the crowd about the culmination of this plaza as a result of community efforts.

"We had a vision when we first bought the property of what it could become," Williams said.

"This is such a special moment and a rich community event because so many people got their hands involved to make it work. That's why it's called the community plaza."

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