An Exciting Renovation for West Alexander Middle School

By ANGELA FARR KING

West Alexander Middle School is in the beginning phases of a major renovation project and with it being mid-July, many administrators might be stressed by this, but Principal Dr. Amy Daigle and Assistant Principal Mrs. Kelly Brantley are excited about the makeover happening at West because it is much needed. They have a solid plan in place to make sure learning is not interrupted for their students during the coming school year.

Dr. Daigle explained that the building is getting a new HVAC system, new roof, new ceilings throughout, and the original boiler is also being replaced. In typical Daigle fashion, Amy has been prepping and planning with her staff for this for months so they are approaching this renovation with enthusiasm about these needs being taken care of.

Dr. Daigle explained that the project is being funded by lottery money, which can only be spent on capital projects, which means projects pertaining to building needs. West Alexander Middle School was built in 1976 so these are 50 year old products being replaced. Daigle explained that even though the building was constructed in 1976, students didn't occupy it until 1977, so there will be a 50 year celebration planned next year for West. The timeline for the project is projected to be June 1, 2026-August 20, 2027 and demolition has begun for Phase One of the project. Dr. Daigle said they are calling the 26-27 school year the "Year of Progress" because they will be able to see the progress unfolding in front of their eyes.

Dr. Daigle explained that the project was carefully planned in phases by the architect and MRI Builders. The first phase is the furthest from the boiler. She said that she was challenged to come up with a schedule to work around the phases so that no teacher would have to move classrooms more than once during the school year and she and her leadership team have done just that. Some teachers have already moved their classrooms and are ready to go for the coming school year because Phase One has already begun.

Daigle discussed the pros and cons of this construction happening while school is in session, which is the only way it's possible. The con is obviously that teachers will have to be flexible and move their classrooms once during the school year, but the pros are that everyone already knows the plans for the entire year and West will undergo the deepest clean it has ever received since its opening in 1977.

Daigle believes in her highly qualified staff and said this will be a refresh for everyone and they are on board with doing what it takes to make this happen as seamlessly as possible for the students at West.

Daigle also said she was impressed with MBI Builders so far because of their clean and efficient demolition of phase one of the project. They have set up a fenced staging area behind the school for their equipment and will basically be doing one wing of the school at a time. They will be in constant contact with school leadership so that she can give teachers one week's notice when it's time to move and deep clean for a new room.

Dr. Daigle said this is a very organized process. She is involved in monthly meetings with the builders and county administrators to monitor progress. She said there will be no sacrifice of instruction during this time.

This has also opened up discussion about creating a better flow for car and bus riders at WAMS. Daigle said the backup of traffic on Hwy. 127 has been a continual problem, so the school moved bus riders up front and car riders to the back. This has led to a project planned to resurface the front parking lot and repaint lines for a new bus parking lot.

Dr. Daigle said a year's worth of thought has gone into the planning for this coming school year. She and her staff are ready and even excited about what's coming. She outlined the phases of the project as follows: Phase 1-the newer part of the old 8th grade wing, Phase 2a-7th grade wing, Phase 2b-6th grade wing, Phase 3a-older part of the 8th grade wing, Phase 3b-gym/health room/weight room/locker room, Phase 4a-media center and chorus room, Phase 4b-exploratory classes and band room, and phase 4c (next Summer)-office area/cafeteria/main halls.

Daigle added that the safety of the staff and students has been a top priority when planning the project. All workers have been vetted. All safety maps for fire exits and tornado plans have already been made for all locations in the building. Daigle reiterated that an entire team will be working together to ensure the progress is ongoing and safe. This team includes herself, Assistant Principal Mrs. Kelly Brantley, Maintenance Director Bryan Davis, Superintendent Dr. Bill Griffin, Auxiliary Services Director Jacob Lail, School Resource Officer Shawtae Watts, and the School Improvement Team. There will be constant monitoring and checks on doors throughout every school day.

Dr. Daigle would like for the public to know that students will not be using lockers this school year due to changing locations so what they bring to school in their bookbags should be limited to only what is necessary. They will be carrying their bookbags throughout each school day. Cell phones are still expected to be off and out of sight to follow the new state law.

It is time for this change at West Alexander Middle School and Dr. Daigle expressed her gratitude for what is being done to improve her school and how these improvements will benefit the students and the community for years to come. She and her staff are tackling this renovation project with positivity and have solid plans in place to ensure West maintains the same standards of success they have celebrated for years.

RENOVATION, PHASE ONE — Phase One of a large renovation project has begun at West Alexander Middle School. The HVAC system is being replaced, along with the roof and all of the ceilings. The boiler is also being replaced. The school is 50 years old, so this is all much needed and being paid for with lottery money. In this photo, Principal Dr. Amy Daigle and Assistant Principal Kelly Brantley show what a classroom looks like with the beginning of demolition on the ceiling in the newer portion of the 8th grade wing.

Smyrna Baptist Church VBS set July 19-23

The members of Smyrna Baptist Church would like to invite the community to their Vacation Bible School, which will be held July 19-23, from 6:30 to 8:45 each night, with Family Night being held on Thursday, July 23.

This year's theme is Junkyard Redemption, based on the verse Ephesians 1:7, which states, "In Him we have redemption through the blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace."

There are classes for all ages from age two to adult. Each night there will be Bible study, music, crafts and recreation and a full meal will be provided.

Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Church plans Vacation Bible School

Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Church, located at 9379 NC Hwy. 127, in Bethlehem, will host "Vacation Bible School in Rome" from Sunday, July 26, through Thursday, July 30.

The Vacation Bible School (VBS) adventure to "Rome" will explore Paul and the Underground Church. VBS is from 5:30 to 8:15 p.m. each evening with closing night beginning at 6:00 p.m. Contact KIC@mtpisgahelca.org for more details. All are welcome to attend.

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