

Beaver Dam's future Fine Arts Center is getting closer to becoming a reality as construction moves rapidly along.

In 2014, Beaver Dam Area Community Theatre purchased a former elementary school at 117 W. Maple Ave., Beaver Dam, to be reconstructed as a theater. After years of fundraising, renovation of the school began in December.

Theatre President and Project Manager Scott Eberle said a great amount of construction has taken place since then, although the public might not know it from just looking at the outside of the building.

"The catwalk has been installed and there is plumbing, electrical and concrete work being done," Eberle said. "The orchestra pit was dug out this past weekend."

Annette Kamps, building fund drive co-chairwoman, said this week's progress was particularly exciting because work began on the elevator shaft.

"Accessibility to all is our focus," Kamps said. "The current theater (located at 219 N. Spring St.) doesn't have that and it limits our audiences."

Kamps and Eberle agreed that what would be even more exciting is meeting BDACT's "no debt" goal.

The organization started with a \$2.4 million budget. Due to increasing costs and a few emerging necessities, such as putting on a new roof and building a scene shop, the total cost has become \$2.89 million. Currently, \$2.55 million in pledges and donations has been received.

“We need people who have been thinking about donating to take action. Anything you can do to help us reach that goal is greatly appreciated,” Eberle said.

Kamps said the Hicks Charitable Foundation, which benefits many youth and community projects within the Beaver Dam area, recently presented a donation of \$15,000 as part of a matching grant.

The public is invited to purchase an engraved granite floor tile, which will be placed in the main lobby of the fine arts center. The deadline to order a tile is April 30.

For more information and how to make a pledge or donate, see bdact.com.

BDACT’s Fine Arts Center will house a 340-seat auditorium, an orchestra pit, a sizable ground floor lobby and multiple spaces on the three floors for theater and community use.

The first concert at the new theater will be a performance by the “Loco-Vocals” on Nov. 2, and the first musical, “A Lyrical Christmas Carol,” will be presented beginning Nov. 29.

“This is a facility we can all be proud of and enjoy for generations,” Eberle said. “I can’t wait for the grand opening.”