

Keller challenge moves BDACT closer to new theater

With additional donations and an updated building plan, Beaver Dam Area Community Theatre is getting closer to creating its new theater in downtown Beaver Dam. To help make that happen, Robert Keller, former Beaver Dam resident and owner of the Park Village Shopping Center, is personally offering a \$100,000 matching grant. BDACT President and General Building Manager Scott Eberle said, "We are now at 2.06 million dollars toward our original campaign goal of \$2.4. We really appreciate this matching offer that encourages completion of the campaign. We look forward to reaching our fundraising goal and ground breaking this fall with grand opening next spring or summer."

In anticipation of reconstruction, asbestos has been removed and several interior walls in the former St. Patrick/St. Katharine Drexel elementary school have been deconstructed. However, due to inflation and some structural issues, there are adjustments to the plan. Although most priorities -- including an elevator for all floors and a state-of-the art at grade accessible 335 seat auditorium -- are assured, modifications for the second and third floors were required. Eberle explained, "We've had to make some difficult decisions to stay within our budget. Although there are necessary changes, the entire building will be accessible for rehearsals, events, meetings, classes and storage for private and public use." One pending priority BDACT hopes to meet in spite of budget limitations is a scene shop. Eberle reported, "The addition of a scene shop is a pretty critical need so we are searching for solutions without sacrificing quality or budget limits. The architectural blueprints will soon be completed and we will be requesting bids with a focus on local companies as much as possible."

Eberle further elaborated that the auditorium will have ground floor access, a top-of-the line sound and lighting system, an orchestra pit, highly adequate performance space and dressing rooms, excellent rest room facilities, and a large lobby with an entry addition on the west side of the building. He added, "At present, BDACT offers twelve to fifteen programs every year. This theater will make it possible to meet new goals, including educational opportunities. It will be an exciting attraction for our entire area community for generations."

As plans go forward for the reconstruction, Campaign Co-Chairs Jim Flynn and Annette Kamps emphasized BDACT's commitment to a no debt goal. Flynn said, "We encourage major donations like Keller's as well as contributions at any level, including the purchase of engraved stone floor tiles and theater seat name plates. Whether you have made an earlier commitment or you are considering a first donation, we now urge everyone to help meet Keller's match plus more to reach our goal."

Like several other major contributors, Keller has a family history of community commitment. From the age of nine when he sold magazines in Beaver Dam to his more recent role as developer and manager of the family owned Park Village Shopping Center, he has been a "go-getter." Following his BDHS graduation in 1945, Keller served in the US Navy as Seaman First Class, then graduated from the UW School of Commerce in 1950. His successful career in real estate includes major projects in downtown and residential Madison. Keller's favorite past times are tennis and three-cushion billiards, including playing in the World Cup Tournament in Las Vegas. He enjoys "staying tuned to politics" and has no interest in retirement - "Not now, not later, maybe much later!" His interest in BDACT and the general development of Beaver Dam is inspired by his father's love for the community, especially demonstrated when Clarence Keller served as Beaver Dam mayor from 1938-1943. With this grant, Robert Keller hopes to motivate everyone to take the campaign to conclusion. As Bob said, "Let's get this done!"

Photo Copy: Beaver Dam Area Community Theatre Building Campaign Co-Chairs Jim Flynn and Annette Kamps introduced an updated rendering of building plans by RKtek to realtor/developer Robert Keller (center). Keller is offering a \$100,000 matching grant toward the completion of BDACT's building campaign.