

Mayor Van W. Johnson, Sr.
Welcome Speech
City's Recreation & Community Services Complex Grand Opening
3:00PM - Friday, July 17, 2009

I like to welcome and thank each of you for coming out to help celebrate the grand opening and the transformation of this old high school campus into a recreation and community services complex.

Young people are our future and healthy communities help secure that future and I'm a firm believer that you cannot build or sustain livable communities without addressing issues that relate to our youth.

The one issue that's near and dear to my heart is providing recreational opportunities and activities for the youth of our community.

As I look around this old campus, which holds scores of fun memories for me, I see a special place that once served the educational needs of a community for many years.

I now see a shift in its emphasis... I see a rebirth of an old facility with a new purpose.

I see a safe place where our children can gather, with a structured environment free of illegal drug activities.

I see a place that will give our children a second opportunity to determine their own destiny.

I see a place where no one person or agency can take sole credit for the good that occur here.

I see a collaboration of agencies and units of government working together toward the best interest of a community, without regard to who gets the credit.

What I see here today involves you, the community, your families, and your children and I like to recognize those who have had a hand in making this vision possible.

First, I like to recognize and commend my fellow board members, commissioners Jimmy Elliott, Mitchell Bartley, Valentina Webb, and Frank Cook for having the courage to take ownership of this old facility and for supporting its transformation.

Secondly, and perhaps one of our most important partners, Superintendent of Franklin County Schools Nina Marks and our school board members, Jimmy Gander, Teresa Ann Martin, David Hinton, George Thompson, and Carl Whaley for giving this campus, which rest in the heart of our community an opportunity to live again.

Thanks go to our city administrator, Betty Taylor-Webb, and her assigned staff of Cindy Summerhill and Shirley Byrd. From the onset, Betty embraced this project, solicited an architectural rendering of what this complex could look like, and applied for federal stimulus dollars to make it happen.

Next would be our Project Impact Director Faye Johnson and her outstanding team of Nadine Kahn, Temolynn Wintons, and Leslie Coon.

Faye understood early on that her task was not to turn Project Impact into an employment agency, but to employ only those who were capable of implementing programs that were in line with the stated goals of the project.

Programs that provide students who fall behind in their studies, with an opportunity to recover needed credits and putting into place programs aimed at reducing the high school dropout rate.

However, I would be remiss if I didn't give special recognition to Cindy Summerhill who Betty assigned to coordinate the activities of Project Impact and the festivities of this grand opening.

Lastly and most of all, I recognize and thank you, the Apalachicola community for supporting your city government in this huge undertaking.

What you have before you today, is a testament of what communities can accomplish when all work together.

I again welcome you and thank you for joining with us today.