

Holy Family Senior Citizen Center Dedication
Friday, February 17, 2012
Mayor Van Johnson, Speech

On behalf of the Apalachicola Board of City Commissioners and staff, I like to welcome and thank each of you for joining with us as we dedicate this building towards a new purpose.

I like to thank each of our city commissioners that are here today for all that they do to make Apalachicola such a great place to live.

I am both pleased and honored to stand here to dedicate this historic facility for use as a Senior Citizen Center - the first in the history of Apalachicola.

Today's dedication represents the end of a long journey. A journey that began four years ago - when Jim (KRUH toe) Croteau and Burt Ivy with Elder Care Services alerted city officials of the availability of a state grant to build new or renovate existing buildings into senior citizen centers throughout the state.

From that point forward, this project would not have been possible without the partnerships entered into by the Apalachicola Board of City Commissioners, including former city commissioner Valentina Webb who was on board at the time.

Such collaborations included assistance from former state representative Will Kendrick who helped the city secure the \$1.5 million dollars necessary to fund the project from the Department of Elder Affairs and its former secretary Dr. Douglas Beach.

Other partnerships and support came in from our current Legislative Delegation, and the former Department of Communities Affairs. In addition, the city received \$50,000 from the Franklin County Tourist Development Council to place a new roof over the community room.

Working point on the project - was city administrator Betty Taylor-Webb with much help from city commissioner Brenda Ash, deputy clerk and grants manager Cindy Summerhill and Joe Taylor from the History, Culture, and Arts Committee.

Our design firm JRA Architects did a wonderful job along with our engineer and construction manager Peter Brown, who employed local contractors to fulfill the city's commitment to create jobs.

I also like to acknowledge our group of Senior Ladies who have done a wonderful job preparing and hosting this dedication. I thank each of you for your desire to keep giving back to your community.

The collaborations and hard work has paid off and today the residents of Apalachicola can realize and celebrate a new beginning.

For decades, this 80-year-old Spanish-style structure has served as a beacon of light, both as a learning facility and as a house of worship to the local African-American community.

Today it gives me great pleasure to dedicate this building and grounds anew - as a center where our seniors can gather and a venue where the community can hold functions and a place where local African-American history, culture and art can be gathered and displayed.

As you can see, city officials went through painstaking measures to ensure the building retained its historic flavor, while incorporating 21st century technology. The heat and air conditioning are energy efficient, zoned, and controlled by computer whether on or off site. The restrooms are modern ADA compliant and the kitchen is commercial grade. The result is a building that represents a resounding success for all the residents of Apalachicola, one that we can be proud of for many generations to come.

In closing, I would like to offer a simple prayer - that this building will forever serve as a symbol of collaboration, where a community came together to create a place for all to use and enjoy.

On behalf of the Apalachicola Board of City Commissioners, and staff - it gives me great pleasure to dedicate and present to you the residents of this great city - this facility.

May God bless this facility and its use and may God continue to bless the City of Apalachicola and this Administration.

Thank you!