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Diving In

**Athletic Facilities Aim to Improve
Student and Community Experiences**



A Team Effort

It is Time for Community Schools to Make a Comeback

By William S. DeJong

Traditionally, athletic facilities are the responsibility of the school district, while recreational facilities are the responsibility of the municipality. The spaces — gyms, pools and fitness areas — are similar; however, most of the time, districts and municipalities build them separately.



DeJong

It doesn't have to be this way. Collaboration is a definite possibility. Maybe it's time for community schools to make a comeback.

The community school movement began in the 1930s when Charles Stewart Mott, who served on the General Motors board of directors for 60 years, became concerned about the

lack of after-school and summer programs for children in Flint, Mich. After school days ended and during summer vacation, school buildings were locked and school sites were fenced off, leaving kids to play on the streets.

Mott approached both the school board and the city about this dilemma, and the community school movement was born. He later formed a foundation in his name that continues to support community schools.

In the early 1980s, I had the good fortune of heading a project funded by the Mott Foundation. The National Center for Community Schools Facility Planning was coordinated by the Council of Educational Facility Planners, International and focused on increasing community involvement in education as well as interagency collaboration. Through this experience, I learned firsthand about the opportunities and challenges of developing joint city/school facilities.

While a number of community schools have been built in North America, the community school movement hasn't completely taken off. One reason is that the public and private sectors are separate entities. Even though schools and cities serve the same constituencies, they have their own governing structures, tax revenues and bureaucracies. They



Ohio's Mason High School was constructed with an adjacent community center through a school-city partnership.

also don't have a good history of sharing and collaborating.

There is no reason for the two entities to not collaborate. After all, communities and school districts have common goals: create more livable communities, address youth issues such as health and obesity, manage aging populations, maximize facilities and nurture community pride.

A community school comeback will require an attitude change among policymakers. It will also require certain laws and systems to allow for co-mingling of resources as well as new interagency bureaucratic structures. It won't be easy, and there will be obstacles to overcome. But when it's done successfully, everyone benefits.

An excellent example of a modern-day community school is Mason High School in Mason, Ohio. Located roughly 25 miles north of Cincinnati, it is one of the highest-performing schools in Ohio: 97 percent of students graduate and 80 percent attend



four-year colleges or universities.

This school was constructed through a school-city partnership. During the 1990s, the city considered building a community center, and the school district considered building a new high school that would include a state-of-the-art fitness/training center. They joined forces to build a new community center adjacent to the new high school.

Since the high school and community center are connected, students are able to access the lap pool, leisure pool, weight room and indoor track, as can members of the community. In addition to recreational activities, the community center also offers a child-care program and senior center. This cradle-to-grave initiative covers every generation, thus enhancing a true sense of community.

The high school and community center are part of a complex that also includes municipal offices, a public library and extensive playing fields — all located on 200 acres of city-owned land. Most of the construction of the complex was financed through school bonds. However, part of the complex is operated by the city, part is operated by the school, and some parts are operated jointly.

Private companies are also located at the complex. For example, a bank on school property provides convenient access to teachers and students. It also provides internships to give high school students real-world experience.

The local hospital also partnered with the school



Continued on page 20

two oil well shafts on the building site that must be plugged before the high school project can continue. Despite the discovery, officials anticipate the project will be completed on time by June 2011.

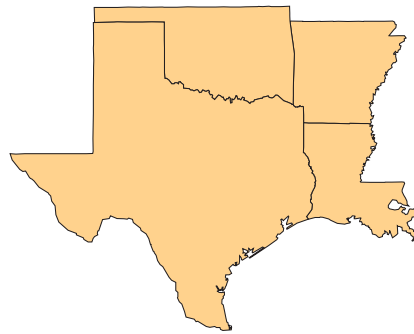
- A \$6.5 million renovation project is under construction at Salem Grade School in **Salem, Wis.** The project includes a seven-classroom addition, an expansion of existing primary grade classrooms to meet state standards and updates to bathrooms. The school's HVAC system will also be updated, the roof and windows replaced and asbestos removed. Some ceiling tiles and worn flooring and cabinets will be

replaced to match the newer areas of the school. Officials are hopeful the renovation will give the school, which consists of several additions completed during the last few decades, a more uniform appearance. Magill Construction of Elkhorn is overseeing construction of the project, the bulk of which is scheduled for completion this fall. The classroom addition is expected to be completed midway through the school year.

South Central

- A planning committee, including representatives from Christus Santa Rosa Health Care of San Antonio and University of Texas Health Science Center, commissioned a feasibility study for a new academic children's hospital in **San Antonio.** The proposed free-standing, nonprofit pediatric hospital would be the first of its kind in San Antonio, officials say. Committee members expect the study to be completed by January 2010 and will use the results to determine how to move forward on the project, including assessment of community need and finding potential locations for the hospital.

- The school board in **Madison, Ala.,** is requesting \$40 million from the federal government to help finance construction of a new high school. Officials plan to take out a loan from the federal stimulus project and use the funds to offset the cost of the projected \$65 million high school. As of press time, no school plans were released.



- Borden County, Texas, officials are planning a new K-12 school following the passage of a \$25 million bond issue in May. The Borden County Independent School District houses 220 K-12 students in one school building and is looking to expand its facilities. Plans include a new K-12 building, bus barns, a maintenance shop, paint shops and agricultural shops. The existing school will be razed as part of the project. Officials estimate the design and construction process will take about two years.

- Block Construction LLC of **Baton Rouge, La.,** submitted the winning bid of \$5.72 million to build a new early learning cen-

ter for the Zachary Community School District in Zachary, La. The firm was the lowest of 11 bidders for the project, which includes a 20-classroom center for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students and a concrete road leading to the site. Officials expect the project to be completed by July 2010.

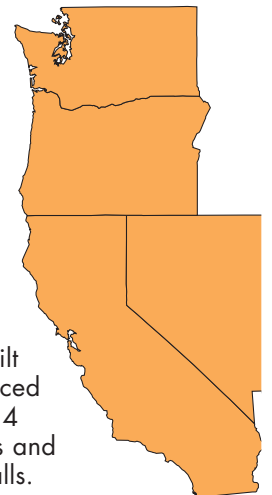
- The Bridge City Independent School District in **Orange County, Texas,** is set to receive a \$3.6 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to help rebuild an elementary school damaged by Hurricane Ike in 2008. Sims Elementary qualified for replacement funding, as the cost of repairs would have been more than 50 percent of the replacement value, according to reports. The obligated funds are part of more than \$1.1 billion in disaster funds sent to Texas since September 2008.

Pacific

- McCarthy Building Companies of San Diego was awarded a contract to complete the construction of a new \$24.3 million parking structure and adjacent police substation at Miramar College in **San Diego.** Harley Ellis Devereaux is the design architect and International Parking Design is the architect of record for the project. The 6,000-square-foot police station building will be designed to LEED Platinum standards and is expected to be the first community college project in the area to achieve the platinum rating from the U.S. Green Building Council. The single-story substation will provide a central hub for

campus security, wayfinding and parking permitting. Green design elements will include a green roof grid system covering most of the roof deck, terra cotta rain screens to create a vented façade and increase building envelope energy efficiency, and Solatube skylights. The four-story, 828-space parking structure will be built with poured-in-place reinforced concrete and will provide 14 interior police parking stalls and 12 adjoining surface lot stalls.

- School board members in **Milpitas, Calif.,** approved four construction packages designed to update facilities at Pearl Zanker Elementary School. Plans include construction of a new multipurpose building and relocatable classrooms; demolition, grading and paving; underground utilities; and electrical work. Underground work is scheduled to start soon, followed by construction of the multipurpose room. The project is expected to be completed by September 2010.



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district to provide a weight room, locker rooms, restrooms, a concession stand and a ticket window for the football stadium. The hospital has its own space as well. Not only is it used for medical rehabilitation, it also affords shadowing, mentoring and apprenticeship opportunities for students within the medical, therapy, nursing and sports medicine fields.

Kevin Bright, superintendent of the Mason City School District, has been an integral part of the community school initiative and has witnessed both the highs and the lows.

"These projects are not without their challenges, but the benefits far outweigh the effort

involved," Bright says. "It has defined the quality of life in our community."

It is time for more cities and school districts to work together to develop joint athletic and recreational facilities. When districts and their communities collectively agree upon goals and decide how to reach them together, everyone benefits.

Schools benefit from increased community support and volunteerism, and the community benefits by partaking in social opportunities while saving tax money.

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