

# Lucas' community theater takes another step – KAN STEP

**T**he city of Lucas in Russell County will use volunteer labor from the community valued at \$199,911 and \$292,485 in KAN STEP funding from the Kansas Department of Commerce to complete an addition to the recently renovated community theater valued at \$492,396.

The theater is currently used to hold community meetings, area school events, weekly movies and community theatrical productions. With the Kansas Department of Commerce, KAN STEP 1,700 square foot addition, the community will have a building that is much more accommodating for theatrical productions and will have expanded meeting room capabilities for area schools, businesses and area and state organizations as well. The expansion will include dressing rooms needed for actors, space to move scenery, additional restrooms and have ample storage for theater props in the basement and second floor mezzanine. Every meeting room in the facility will also have state of the art wiring with hook-ups to accommodate the latest in computer, Internet, and communication technology.



*Shane Holthaus  
KAN STEP Tech*

## The first step

The community of Lucas had already demonstrated both financial and working commitments to the original theater renovation in 1999 with a \$40,000 initial investment

from the city and initial community donations that eclipsed the original \$90,000 renovation budget. The Lucas Area Community Theater, Inc. (LACT) was established as a 501(c) 3, not-for-profit corporation to handle theater management. With the Lucas Theater's track record, it is no surprise that the theater addition found funding from the Kansas Department of Commerce KAN STEP Program.

The Lucas Theater Addition Project representative or "Sparkplug" and President of the Lucas Area Community Theater Board, is Les Schneider, who in his other life is Plant Manager at Great Plains Manufacturing's Lucas facility. The company builds, among other things, Land Pride commercial mowing equipment.

Water Association has provided inspection services and technical assistance by me and Mike Fisher, KAN STEP Tech from Wilson.

We began by providing specialty equipment and expertise in actually getting started with a project – getting foundations and concrete floors poured. The Lucas project had a lot of concrete!

## Getting started

The project's basement excavation started on October 19, 2005 with nearly 1,000 cubic yards of earth removed. During the excavation a rock walled well and an old trash pit were discovered, yielding several old bottles of all shapes and sizes. Even some gold spittoons were found, but no gold coins turned up to add to the building fund.



*The photo shows excavation that is nearly finished, with the operator pulling earth from the last corner of the addition's basement. Over 1,000 cubic yards were removed for the project. A skid steer loader was later lowered into the hole to smooth and level the floor before construction of footing forms.*

The project grant administration is provided by Michele Kippes of Northwest Kansas Planning and Development. Don Marrs of DMA Architects, Salina, is the architect for the project. The Kansas Rural

After two days of digging, footings were started that needed to be substantial enough to accommodate 26 feet of insulated concrete form (ICF) wall structure, 10 inches of concrete, with 2½

inches of foam on each side, to be poured on top in three different stages. Several tons of sand were scooped into the excavation and leveled out. This preceded the pouring of the basement floor and

technical know-how from the start, and volunteers lead by project Sparkplug, Les Schneider, solved many technical curve-balls thrown by the project. I would not hesitate to say that this has been one of the

most professionally executed KAN STEP projects that I have been lucky enough to work on.

Les Schneider, having CAD computer design experience, is also responsible for the concept



**Above:** KRWA KAN STEP Tech Mike Fisher, front, works with volunteers Brian Steinle and Frank Pool to build footing forms after the basement floor has been smoothed and leveled with the skid steer.



**Center:** The concrete pumper truck is giving the basement floor volunteer crew all they can handle but they won't be finished until they fill the first section of foam ICF wall forms around the perimeter of the floor.



**Right:** Volunteer Gary Wilson from Lucas secures black sheathing paper on the addition roof.

drawings and initial design for the project. It took a great deal of planning and research to get things just right. Don Marrs of DMA Architects, Salina, provided the final drawings with the proper

was no easy task, considering that the basement excavation was deep and wide. The sand was dumped in one corner, scooped into wheel barrows and leveled out from there. Everyone's aching back remembers it well! After the first ICF wall forms were poured, it was time to assemble some structural steel. The main beam and post was installed so that the bar joist could be fitted and welded into place. Decking was then put down and spot welded, making ready for the main floor concrete to be poured. The main floor was poured on January 6, 2006, making it possible for concrete to be poured in the remaining ICF wall sections. It would take two more wall pours to get to the top.

**Things got technical**

The Lucas theater addition project required a high degree of

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codes for every phase of the project. With Les knowing what he wanted and Don Marrs able to get final architectural plans, the project is steadily moving to completion, targeted for June 1, 2007.

truss in the proper location so that the bar joist could be poured in place. The top few rows of block needed to be removed from the existing theater to enable the continuation of the roof line. With

horizontal metal was attached every two feet horizontally to the small vertical I-beams inside of the ICF form (these vertical beams are eight inches on center). With the horizontal beams installed, the tin



**Above:** Project Sparkplug Les Schneider is busy making sparks as he welds the steel tubing frame for the theater's behind the stage, moveable movie screen frame.

**Above right:** KRWA KAN STEP Techs Shane Holthaus, left, and Mike Fisher, flank Les Schneider, holding a set of plan drawings, discuss the routing of some of the addition's duct work running along the ceiling.



After the ICF concrete walls were poured, the next step was to install the roof bar joist. Special supports were installed from floor level up to the roof truss to hold the

this portion of the job accomplished, decking, insulation board sheathing and rolled roofing were then installed. Not much time was wasted on this project with Les and his team only missing a couple of weekends since project startup.

#### Finally, hanging tin

The only thing left outside was to install the tin to the ICF forms. To do this, a horizontal hat channel was utilized. This piece of

could be screwed every 9 inches, which is perfect for standard pro-panel (barn tin). An attractive hipped awning has been constructed over the walk doors on the east end of the addition; new doors at the front of the theater have also been added, although they were not part of the grant. The awning was a design addition that dressed up the alley-side of the theater and will make for easy loading and unloading during bad weather.



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### Volunteers move inside

With the theater's exterior work completed, work started in earnest on the inside during the late winter and early spring of 2006. Some of the curveballs the project threw were on the inside work and included the running of the duct work and getting it to fit within the parameters of the steel roof support structure, interior rooms and the locations of the HVAC units on the roof. "Hindsight being perfect and all, we would have done things a little differently when locating units on the roof, but we were able to work through those problems," Schneider explained.

Another trying time was when electrical service was tied-in to the new addition. "Practically all of the original theater's electric service was located on the back wall, which we had to demolish in order to make room for the addition's expanded stage, so all the new boxes and connections had to be made at once," Schneider said. "That weekend we had a large

volunteer contingent on hand to get that major task accomplished." With all the inside wiring, plumbing and HVAC nearly completed as of December 29, January 2007 was scheduled to be a

harder than if we'd been shut down as we were during the original renovation. Depending on how much we have torn up during our construction day, we have to stop early by 4 or 5 p.m. and get things

**During all the construction of the addition project, the resurrected theater that has been serving the community since November of 2000 has continued operation with movies shown on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights.**

month for sheetrock hanging and finishing.

### The show must go on

During all the construction of the addition project, the resurrected theater that has been serving the community since November of 2000 has continued operation with movies shown on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. Volunteer construction workdays are scheduled on Fridays and Saturdays. "Everything has been

cleaned up and put back together for the evening movie," Schneider explained. "Right now we have a plastic drape tied back that we can drop and block off all our back stage work behind the viewing screen."

### Heading back to Lucas

Our KRWA KAN STEP team looks forward to making more visits to Lucas, delivering needed specialty tools and making the final inspections early next summer. We might even have to stay late and catch a movie.

KAN STEP is a self-help program that enables small communities to make major infrastructure improvements. Local people volunteer labor and services or "sweat equity," while the Kansas Department of Commerce provides funding for materials and technical services. An acronym for Kansas Small Towns Environment Program, KAN STEP gives small Kansas communities an opportunity to do projects they couldn't otherwise afford. The funding is provided through the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.

Learn more about the Department of Commerce KAN STEP program. Attend the KRWA Annual Conference March 27-29 in Wichita.



*On December 29, 2006, with sheetrock hanging and finishing ready to start on the inside, the theater addition exterior with the rain sheltering awning over the back porch looked nearly ready for business.*