



## Event marks culmination of years of work

*By Carolyn Lee*

*The Imperial Republican*

It is with great joy that a number of entities in Imperial, as well as patrons, will celebrate the opening of the new Imperial swimming pool this weekend. Many people have worked together to make the pool a reality.

The grand opening will begin on Sunday from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. with food booths manned by youth groups from the Crossroads Wesleyan and St. Patrick's Catholic Churches.

At 1 p.m., Master of Ceremonies Matt Fisher, Superintendent of Chase County Schools (CCS), and Imperial Mayor Annie Longan will speak.

Park Board member Dianne Way will also address the challenge to organizations that purchased the benches and tables used at the pool.

From 1-5 p.m. free swimming will be offered in the new pool, as well as the use of a Bouncy House sponsored by Owens True Value.

Beginning at 4 p.m. drawings will be held for the Campbell Park raffle. Prizes include a television, swim passes, Chamber Bucks and school event passes, among others.

In addition, there will be Chamber drawings every 15 minutes from 1:30-3:45 p.m. Mary Deyle of the Chamber said people may register Sunday for the drawings, which include swim passes of various kinds, as well as 11 gift packets "for kids to enjoy the summer in the water," such as beach towels.

Those drawings are sponsored in conjunction with the park board, Deyle noted.

A bubble machine will be part of the fun in the afternoon, too, Deyle said.

"We feel that any time Imperial works hard to get something accomplished, such as the pool, we need to celebrate its success," she said. "It's just going to be a fun afternoon."

The new pool, located just south of CCS, adjoins the new football stadium. A common parking lot is shared.

The pool house will be used by both the city for the pool, and by the school as locker rooms for football teams.



Fisher said the joint project came about, from the school's standpoint, when the board was looking into building a football locker room.

At the same time the city was looking for a location for a new pool.

“What do we need for a locker room, and what do they need for a pool house?” Fisher asked. “There wasn’t much difference.”

The location of a pool across 9th Street from the school was also attractive, he said, as it would allow the school to incorporate water activities in its physical education program.

“In the end we ended up spending less than if we’d built a locker room complex on our own,” Fisher noted. The cost savings were tremendous, he added.

Teamwork—that’s what the new pool facility is all about. The city of Imperial and CCS joined together to build the facility. They formed the Chase County Community Facilities Agency, which signs contracts and pays bills.

Members are Fisher, school board member Dirk Haarberg, City Clerk/Administrator Jo Leyland and city council member Sue Moore.

Each government entity provided part of the cost of the project. A lot of other funding sources also contributed money.

The total project, which includes the pool house, pool and parking lot, cost \$2,441,276, according to Leyland.

The city bonded \$1.5 million for its share of the project. CCS’s share, which included the pool house and parking lot only, was \$512,190, according to Fisher.

City Economic Development Coordinator Leslie Carlholm, who sought grants for some of the funding, said other sources included a \$150,000 grant from the Nebraska Game and Parks Land and Water Conservation Fund; \$156,000 from the Alta Hier Fund donated to the city and earmarked for a pool project; a \$75,000 grant from the Peter Kiewit Foundation; an \$8,000 grant from the Imperial Community Foundation; \$3,537 from a local service organization challenge; \$884 from the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality; and many individual and fundraiser donations.

The project was “a titch” under budget, Leyland noted. The city had budgeted \$50,000 for the demolition of the old swimming pool at Campbell Park. The bid by Koellner Enterprises came in at \$30,000.

Playground equipment at the pool, which was installed recently, cost \$22,626 and was paid by the Agency, Leyland said.

The pool house consists of two locker rooms with bathrooms, two public restrooms, a spacious concession area and mechanical rooms.

The concession stand sparkles with color, as CCS students have created a mosaic that is displayed on the front of the counter.

Art teachers Chelsea Zuege and Nicole Long involved all of the elementary students and about 60 high school students in the project.

The students created the design, which encompasses the use of the area, i.e. track, football and water. They glazed over 200 tiles, fired them, broke them up, placed them and grouted them. The students also created tiles that name people who donated money for the mosaic project.

“The students were involved in the process from beginning to end,” Zuege noted.

The donor tiles are also displayed on the concession counter. They were designed to be a “thank you” to those people, Zuege said, as the whole mosaic project was funded by those donations.

The pool holds 188,000 gallons of water. It has a deep end with swimming lanes, a diving board and slide in the deep end, and a small slide and a baby bungee in the shallow end.

It also has a zero entry, or slope, into the pool, to make it handicapped accessible.

Leyland said the city has already scheduled the district qualifying meet at the pool on July 11. She said she's heard rumors about leaks in the pool, or water running over.

There are no leaks, she stated. The equipment was turned on May 13 and "everything has gone pretty well." All of the equipment, such as the chlorinator, is automatic, and employees have been trained on operating it.

Leyland said the pool is designed so that grates along the gutters expel the water, so it appears that the pool is too full.

"It operates completely differently than the old pool," she noted.

### **Long time coming**

It was probably over 10 years ago that the city began thinking about either repairing or replacing the old pool. It had serious leaks, a heating problem and antiquated plumbing.

A number of committees were formed to study the problem. It seemed as if the city couldn't afford to build the type of pool people wanted.

In about 2006 talks began between the city and school about sharing the project. In August, 2007 the first document was signed to form the Chase County Community Facilities Agency.

A contract was signed with Simon Contractors of North Platte. The pool was to have been completed by Aug. 1, 2008, but was not signed off on until Sept. 24, 2008.

Leyland said Simon Contractors was penalized \$16,500 for missing the deadline.

This was the first project in town that was jointly funded and owned.

Carlholm said, "We saved the taxpayers a tremendous amount of money by partnering."

Leyland agreed. "We saved the taxpayers money on both sides (school and city). It's a beautiful facility.

"I hope we can do these kinds of things again," she added, whether it be partnering between the city and school, the county, or for whatever project needs to be addressed.

"I think we've been real pleased with how the whole process has gone," Fisher said. "In any project issues come up. As they did, we worked well with the city to settle those issues."

Carlholm said, "I think the community should be really proud of working together to make this a reality." She said other towns are taking notice. "It's not only an accomplishment for our community, but it shows other communities how to do it."

Park Board member Elizabeth Haarberg, who has been active in fundraising for the new pool, said she's "thrilled and excited to see it complete. When I drive by and see a new thing added, I think it looks great."

Haarberg hopes people will keep the area clean and enjoy it. "I can't wait to see the kids in it having fun," she said.