

BUILDING for NOW & the FUTURE

Volunteer army comes together to create a COVID-safe space for spring semester fine arts events

The first weekend of February marked great progress and the completion of the outdoor stage. Located next to the art portables, the platform provided ample outdoor space for COVID-safe performances of all kinds. More than 60 parents, teachers and student volunteers came together to complete the stage on Feb. 6 and 7.

Among the volunteers was Nicole Wayman, the project's leader and the mother of sophomore dance major Nia Wayman. Through organizing and collaborating with parents and other fine art strands, including fundraising and acquiring permits, Wayman led the community project to fruition.

"Once the McCallum administration approved the plan, we had to get approval from the district construction team," Wayman said. "Once we got approval from the district, we were able to promote the project, fund raise and officially launch."

Weston Blaney, the father of technical theatre freshman Carys Blaney, drew the architectural plans for the stage. Wayman said after she saw the drawing, she recognized that the project would not be cheap.

Based on that awareness, Shaneye Ferrell, another of the project's leaders and the mother of junior theater major Grace Hickey, contacted Lowe's seeking funding help. The networking eventually led to the project receiving a Lowe's Community Heroes Grant.

"We applied for grants and called local businesses

for support," Wayman said, "That is where Lowe's came in with their Community Heroes Grant. Once we knew they would help with the cost and construction, the goal seemed achievable. Everything moved very quickly after that."

Another important figure at the weekend's build was math teacher Matt Whipple. Whipple came out on both Saturday and Sunday to help secure the beams and joists.

"We kind of fumbled at the beginning," Whipple said. "Saturday morning was a two steps forward, one step back kind of day at first, but after we got into a flow, everyone worked together really well. It was a lot of fun, and we got a lot done."

Whipple was impressed with the collaboration that took place.

"Not only did you have some staff out there, but you had student parents and even a parent of future Knights and the future Knight himself," Whipple said. "I was actually out there with one of my students that I have this year, and

I got to meet and work very closely with a parent whose kid I found out is in my class."

"I got to work with students that I have and students that I used to have and their parents."

Through hard work and team effort, the stage was completed. Wayman said that more than 2,700 decking screws were used along with nearly 200 cubic feet of concrete to make up the pier and beam foundation. The framework (support structure between concrete and decking) of the stage was constructed of 40 2x12 beams and 70 2x10 joists, which connect the beams and support the flooring.

There was still more to be done.

after the weekend build. The stage needed to be weathered, and a ramp still needed to be built. The landscape bricks around the front of the stage still needed to be secured as well.

This stage was the outcome of the community working together to better McCallum and the fine arts programs in the midst of the pandemic and open up

new, safer opportunities for performances, clubs and other events.

"Right now, the outdoor stage gives the MAC community a slice of hope — something to look forward to," Wayman said, "whether it be a performance or an opportunity to collaborate safely outside."

Once school returns to normal, the hope is that this space can be used for McCallum clubs, lunch meetups or outdoor lectures. There could be endless uses. The stage was a way to expand McCallum's space, and it will be used for a long time after this year's Knights are gone. It was a chance to be able to hold community events and still abide by COVID-19 restrictions.

"I think it [the stage] is important because there are a lot of groups, and we are always trying to compete for space, and it's yet another venue to practice and meet for shows," Whipple said. "It is another space, and it's great because the more spaces to work out and practice and perform, the better."

The construction and completion of the outdoor stage marked a great community achievement, which brought people together to work towards the goal of creating future opportunities.

"This project was truly a community collaboration," Wayman said.

In an email to project stakeholders, Wayman said she was moved by the double-digit number of

students who came out to help with the construction of the stage that weekend. Wayman also thanked Ian Evilsizor and Joy Neyland from the Shoal Creek Lowe's for working as part of the crew all weekend long.

Senior Will Dooley was among the students who came out to help, spending three hours on Sunday installing the stage floor and the stone wall surrounding it.

"I wasn't doing tech this year," Dooley said, "but I wanted to still help the program."

Another volunteer was Wayman's daughter Nia.

"I volunteered because I want to be a part of building the stage that I will be performing on in a few weeks," Nia said. "Now I can say I built the stage with my bare hands, and I got to sign it, which you'll never see unless you take it apart."

She added that she felt good about being a part of the community build because the stage will help students now and long into the future.

"This project is really important because it will be here for generations for future Knights," Nia said. "I think it is important because it gives our fine arts students and others an amazing opportunity to perform and express themselves while being safe and abiding COVID safety."

In March the stage hosted the MacTheatre musical, *Urinetown*, and the student-directed dance show, *From The Ground Up*. Story by Josie Bradsby



LITTLE HELPING HANDS: Alpha Noack, 7, delivers a wooden block to be installed as a stage support. Noack worked the Saturday morning shift with his younger brother Christopher and his mom, science teacher Sarah Noack.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAYMAN: During the Saturday morning work session, junior Pascale Easterday nailing in a stage support block while her mother Anastasia holds it in place.



A SIGNATURE MOMENT: Before starting the day of construction, students signed their names on the wood that was used to build the stage.

SOCKET TO 'EM: Securing a metal bracket that will house a support block, freshman Finn Griffith was one of the many volunteers who showed up early to help on Saturday morning. Photos by Dave Winter



ABOVE: Mr. Whipple cuts off a bolt so volunteers can add a support beam for the stage. LEFT: Associate principal Gabe Reyes reviews the plans with volunteers. Reyes said working on the stage was one of his proudest moments in his 15 years at Mac. "I remember after the dance show and *Urinetown*, I was walking back to my car, and I was like 'This is what it means to serve your community.' Photos by Dave Winter