

**WALLINS MARKS OPENING
OF NEW ADDITION,
COMPLETION OF
RENOVATION PROJECT;
DEDICATIONS ANNOUNCED
DURING CEREMONY**

A ceremonial ribbon cutting was held Tuesday, signaling the completion of the Wallins Elementary School addition and renovation project.

The approximately \$7 million project replaced the oldest section of the building which served several generations of Wallins area families. The project also provided

other major upgrades, including the elimination of a coal fired furnace.

During remarks presented in the newly renovated gymnasium, Superintendent Brent Roark noted that the Harlan County Board of Education consistently voted 5-0 in support of the project. He pointed out the project was “complicated” as the new addition was constructed behind the oldest section of the building and connected to the newer classroom section as well as the gymnasium. The oldest part of the building was razed in late spring.

He said it wasn’t a “monster of a project,” but one that required detailed planning.

Roark said it was exceptional that the project proceeded on schedule despite obstacles presented from the Covid-19 virus.

He said Principal Stan Nicely, his staff, students and the community are to be commended for their cooperation during construction.

“Mr. Nicely may not know it, but he has an incredible staff,” said Roark. Nicely later countered saying he knows his staff is “incredible,” adding teachers, students and staff displayed great versatility throughout construction.

Roark said it was difficult to teach classes while construction took place on the campus with loud noises, moving of some classrooms, and other interruptions.

He thanked the community for patience with traffic disruptions and other issues which resulted during the project.

Nicely commended Roark for his leadership on the project.

"I strongly believe that if anyone else were superintendent, this project would not have been completed, he said. "Mr. Roark put tons of thought and effort into our school and went to great lengths to see it to completion.

Board of Education Chairman Gary Farmer said the project had been in the works for 20 years. He noted that the late Jim Roark, who was a former Wallins principal and county magistrate, was instrumental in keeping the dream alive for a new facility. He said it was in the state budget on at least three occasions but eliminated due to budget cuts.

Superintendent Brent Roark is Jim Roark’s son.



Several areas of the school were named in memory and to honor longtime supporters and employees. Wallins students made temporary signs for the designated areas as the Covid-19 virus delayed delivery of the permanent signage.

The middle school, which is in the new addition, was named the Jim Roark Academic Center. Farmer said it was the goal to recognize the history of the school.

The mechanical room is named after longtime custodians Ballard Honeycutt and Clyde Hensley. The new addition and renovation eliminated the outdated coal fired furnace which was hand fed for more than three quarters of a century.

Athletic trophy cases were named to honor the late Elijah Buell, a Wallins student, athlete, magistrate and longtime supporter. His wife, Joyce, and sons Michael and Elijah Buell Jr. were in attendance.

Academic trophy cases were named to honor Wallins faculty and staff.

The gymnasium is now the Wallins Alumni Gymnasium. The hall of fame will continue. Special recognition was given to the late Rev. J.G. Hackler and to Edna Baute for their services to the alumni over the years. The gymnasium recognizes athletic accomplishments from Wallins and Black Star.

The cafeteria was named in memory of Clarissa Brigmon, a longtime manager. Her family continues to serve the community through the Clarissa Brigmon Foundation by donating supplies and equipment and awarding academic scholarships.

The name of former teacher, counselor and principal William A. Lee will be on the school's library/media center. He has worked for Harlan County Schools for more than 60 years. He was in attendance for today's celebration.

The William Otis Belcher Primary Wing is named in honor of the former principal. During his administration, Belcher put an increased focus on the primary program at Wallins. His daughter attended today's event.

The Superintendent offered commendations to many others for their work throughout construction. He said Robert Simpson appeared to be at the school most of the time addressing tasks at hand. He thanks custodians Pete Stewart, Mickey Marcum, Brent Noe, Spencer Britton and Mitchell Caldwell.

Roark thanks Architect Scott Noel and Summit Engineering for their creative work and Codell Construction's team of Jim Codell, Kenny Davis and Doug Smith. He noted the versatility and determination presented by all was instrumental in a successful project.

He thanked Judge-Executive Dan Mosley and the fiscal court for continued support. He cited examples where he admitted to being surprised with how quickly Mosley and Magistrate James Howard responded to calls for assistance.

Other accolades were given to the Kentucky Department of Transportation, Brian Cassim and Leo Miller; the Contractors of Rising Sun, Brandon Griffin, supervisor; and local contractors including Cumberland Mine, Mr. Craig Garland and Bob Rutherford; contactors Bobby Crider, Travis Hensley, Billy Taylor, and Elliott Construction, and Randall Meade; and also the Wallins Fire Department.

Roark said there are some finishing touches to take place, such as installment of the playground equipment.