

Rotary revamp

Visalia Rotarians celebrate centennial with theater upgrades

Lauren Jennings Visalia Times-Delta USA TODAY NETWORK

Visalia Rotarians are celebrating 100 years of service by revitalizing a community favorite – the Rotary Theater.

Each year, over the last 10 years, Visalia Rotarians have set aside \$10,000 for a community project. At the time, the group had no idea where the money would be going.

The Redwood High School Rotary Theater, dedicated to the Rotarians who helped establish it, seemed like a perfect project.

The auditorium was last updated in 1987, and for a time, it was operated under a joint powers agreement between the city and school district before Visalia Unified took over in 2005.

The school district has made improvements from time to time, but limited funding has left the theater in need of repairs, said Gerald Schneider, Centennial chairman and head of the Rotary Theater Project.

Simply put, the Redwood High School Rotary Theater is in need of a major revamp.

Prior to the pandemic, the auditorium was open 143 days of the year — VUSD theater, drama, band, orchestra and dance all used the theater. It's also used during scholarship nights and other community events and performances, according to Scott Jacobson, one of three Co-Chair Sponsorship members leading the 'Centennial Celebration.' Currently, the Rotary Theater is seeing some of those muchneeded improvements.

Over 300 seats have been removed from the auditorium, as well as the theater's carpeting and its older lighting fixtures (not including the main stage lights).

The classic mosaic windows and ceiling lights are there to stay, with new purple and mauve accents throughout the building highlighting some of the window's colors. Initial planning was discussed in 2019, and Schneider said so far, volunteers Susan and Rick Mangini "have been instrumental in working with the district and driving the project forward" and Visalia Unified staff "have been able to perform a good portion of the work, with Rotary helping with the cost."

The Rotarians estimate an October completion date... and they have to meet that deadline because the Rotary Theater is already booked for 28 out of 31 days throughout that month.

Overall, the theater's seating needs replacement, new carpets need to be installed, the interior needs to be repainted, the stage curtain needs to be replaced, and the outdoor marquee also needs attention... the list continues.

See ROTARY, Page 5A



The Rotary Theater is undergoing a transformation... renovations are already underway and students can expect to enjoy the modernized auditorium in October. LAUREN JENNINGS/VISALIA TIMES-DELTA

Rotary

Continued from Page 3A

This is why Visalia Rotary opted to celebrate its centennial by renovating the theater.

The current plan is to hold a fundraiser and celebration event in early 2022 to raise \$500,000 in funds for the revamping. Those interested can also “buy” a seat within the Rotary Theater, with “naming rights for yourself, your business, or in honor of a loved one.”

Some of those funds have been raised, like the \$100,000 saved up by the Rotary Club of Visalia, but they are still looking for funds to complete the project.

The Jan. 22, 2022 “Centennial Celebration“ includes a presentation of Visalia Rotary and its impact on the city over the last 100 years. There will also be drinks celebrating each of the last eras over the last centennial and eventgoers are encouraged to dress in their favorite era’s clothing styles.

For more information, call 559-3346806.

Lauren Jennings covers education and news for the Visalia Times-Delta/ Tulare Advance-Register. Follow her on Twitter @lolojennings. Get alerts and keep up on all things Tulare County for as little as \$1 a month. Subscribe today.



Rotary Theater renovations are already underway and students can expect to enjoy the modernized auditorium in October.

LAUREN JENNINGS/VISALIA TIMES-DELTA

[© Visalia Times-Delta](#)
[Powered by TECNAVIA](#)
