

Middle school auditorium gets a facelift

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A 92-year-old middle school in Crescent City is getting an upgrade to its auditorium, including new seats, floors and windows.

The nearly-completed facelift to the Crescent Elk Middle School auditorium also includes new lights, fresh paint and two high-quality cameras — so events held there can be live streamed. The upgrade was possible thanks to a \$150,000 donation from the Nick and Lisa Rail foundation, which was then matched by funds from the Del Norte Unified School District.

Nick Rail, an alumnus of Del Norte schools, said he hopes the upgrade will provide a premium experience for future performers and attendee, during a May school board meeting.

“My wife Lisa and I are beyond excited with the collaboration of the community and the school district,” said Rail.

Jeff Harris, superintendent of Del Norte Unified School District, said the district is grateful for the upgrade, as the auditorium was beginning to show its age, and there are not many other venues for the creative arts in

the area.

“The bottom of the wall was peeling, the plaster was pitted, the windows were single-pane and not very energy efficient,” said Harris. “There are very few places in the county where you could gather people together. Well, this is kind of a community center.”

Harris said the donation from the Rails transformed what was initially a five-year project, into an 18-month project. The district is planning to auction off the old cast-iron seats, which were recently removed.

A grand reopening ceremony for the updated auditorium is tentatively scheduled for the end of September.

Looking ahead, Harris said the district and the Nick and Lisa Rail Foundation are moving forward with plans for a proposed \$20 million performing arts center near the high school, which will seat about 1,000 people. Harris said the district’s goal is to complete construction by 2027-2028. On Thursday, the school board met with Nick Rail to formalize a memorandum of understanding for the project.