



Gift promotes the arts

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Old library transformed for college

Corporate Contractors, Inc. (CCI) workers have been grinding down floors, raising ceilings and tearing off portions of the roof this week at the former Beloit Public Library in downtown Beloit.

The \$4 million project will be completed by July 2.

The 48,000-square-foot structure, located on the corner of Grand Avenue and Pleasant Street, is a gift to Beloit College from Beloit business leader Diane Hendricks and her late husband and Beloit College trustee Ken Hendricks.

Beloit College will open the former library as an educational facility for the arts this fall.

The new facility, which will house the college's music and dance programs and other campus educational activities, became available when the Hendricks Group assumed sole ownership of the original Beloit Mall and began to transform it into a community resource, renaming it the Eclipse Center.

The city was able to purchase the former J.C. Penney's department store at the south end of the Eclipse Center, and move the Beloit Public Library to the renovated and enlarged location. As part of the arrangement, the city transferred ownership of the original downtown library to the Hendricks family. In turn, the family gave it to the college as a completed new facility. The gift to the college includes the structure and renovations.

CCI began the renovations in December. As of Thursday, the building was mostly cleared out, according to project manager Clint Wallisch.

He said the outside of the building won't change very much and the footprint of the building will stay about the same.

Inside the building, however, is a different story. Most all of the interior walls have been ripped down and recycled.

Because the north side of the facility will be home to a dance studio, the structure is being raised, said CCI Supervisor Brad Siegworth.

Siegworth said the cement and marble floors will be polished, and features from its history as a post office will be included in the renovations.

"We are trying to keep as much of the original building as we possibly can," Siegworth said.

Since the project began there have been about six to eight workers on site daily, but in March and April, 24 to 30 workers will be on site installing electrical wiring, plumbing and more, Wallisch said.