

Gym adds to camp's image, provides more room

Written by Chris Lee



Taking nothing and making something out of it. A theme of sorts for Camp Machasay. When it came to an old quonset, that is exactly what happened.

Last fall, work began on an old quonset on the property 12 miles northeast of Holyoke that Camp Machasay calls home.

Camp Director Bryan Kroeger said the building was full of Mel's treasures, referring to the late Mel Nagatz who donated the property Camp Machasay sits on today.

After a couple of months of cleaning and clearing things out of the shed, work began on renovating and building the inside.

Before the project began last fall, the camp didn't have a place where campers could spend time when Mother Nature decided to open the gates and let rain fall. The project was wrapped up in May just in time for staff training. With the type of summer the area experienced, it was a good thing the gym was finished.

The first two camps this past summer were plagued by rain and mud, so the gym was a great place for campers to go and hang out.

A variety of games and activities are offered inside, such as archery, pool tables, basketball, dodgeball and more. There is also a store which was dubbed the Tradin Post and coffee shop, where drinks and food may be purchased.

A camper sat down at one of the tables and decided it should also be used as a checker board so she took the time to paint a checker/chess board directly onto the tabletop.

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There are also two big offices within the building. The space is a big upgrade from the office that was utilized in the fellowship hall.

The building was originally built in 1948 for about \$4,000, according to camp manager Mike Frazier. It was originally a storage area and a farmer's shop.



Kroeger said Naggatz recently showed him a photo of construction on the building and asked him if he knew a couple of the gentlemen in the photo. Kroeger said he had no clue and Naggatz said they were Kroeger's uncles.

A donation of nearly \$20,000 helped fund the project. "It's been countless and countless hours of people volunteering," Kroeger said. "Countless farmers, local people, churches and work groups all pitched in to finish the project up," he added.

The property was donated in 2001 and the first camp was held in 2004. Today there are nearly 50 acres for campers to enjoy. Anything from horseback riding, ATVs and clay pigeon targets can be experienced.

Camp Machasay hopes to use the gym for other functions such as fund raising events, potential concerts and guest speakers.

Kroeger said they are looking into installing a heating system of some type sometime in the future.

Don Oestman kind of headed up the project, but Frazier said a bunch of people with different talents all came together and worked as a team to make the project a success. Both Kroeger and Frazier agree there are too many people to name that volunteered time to work on the gym.

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The walls were covered with OSB or chipboard and portray the “rugged” look of the rest of the camp. Walking into the fellowship hall, pieces and parts of old fences and doors are used on the walls as well as photos dating back many years.