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Pirate pride in their bones



Ceramic Pirate skulls are lined up Friday inside the Putnam City Schools Museum being put together by alumni at NW 40 and Grove in Warr Acres.

In October, district officials let some preservation-minded Putnam City High School alumni move boxes of history into the building at 4101 N Grove Ave., which once was a store where students bought their books and supplies.

The alumni plan to display the story of a school district that has gone from rural to urban since 1914.

Archiving the district's history has been a passion of Gloria Quaid since 1984. A 1963 Putnam City graduate, Quaid was an editor on the district magazine Putnam City Hi-Lites and contributed to it from 1963 to 1982 when the magazine was discontinued. While serving as a school board member in 1984, she decided to start keeping boxes of school memorabilia in a room in the student services building and then in the Arnett Building. "I think it's really important any time you keep your history. This is the history of a school district, and school is what ties a community together and ties a group of people together. We know we come from Putnam City, and we're really proud of that," Quaid said. "It's a shared sense of pride." As a fifth-grader in 1954, Quaid remembers buying her school books in what is now the preservation center.

She said extra Hi-Lites magazines and yearbooks are sought for the center. If duplicate copies are donated, the group can sell them to raise money to support the center.

David Apgar, Putnam City High School class of 1976, said the district's entire history will be presented.

"The history of the whole school district displayed here will be a great thing. We're just a few years from our own centennial," Apgar said.

"Hopefully we'll have a lot for people to come in and see."

Sheron Folsom Rodgers, Putnam City High School class of 1964, said countless items are stored in stacks of metal trunks in the building. Shelves are being built and walls are being painted with volunteer help.

Class rings, photographs, student directories and old report cards have been donated, Rodgers said.

"We still have a garage full of stuff we haven't brought over here yet," she said. "We're hopeful to get things from all of the schools."

Rodgers said the group wants to find more Putnam City West and Putnam City North items, as well as items from other district schools.

'Lifelong learning center'

Rodgers held up a hanger with Sally Chesnutt Felts' "athletic queen" jacket. Felts graduated from Putnam City High School in 1957. In 1956, the school had two sport queens, one for football and one for basketball, Felts said. She was elected basketball queen.

Felts worked in the school cafeteria while she finished school, she said. Principal Leo Mayfield let her accept the honor, although it was usually awarded to seniors, she said. Donating the jacket to the center is her way of showing loyalty, she said.

"It means a great deal to me because it's for my school," Felts said.

Jim Shields graduated in 1950 when the school still had 12 grades in one central area near NW 39 and Grove Avenue.

"There was still a lot of open space around and dirt roads," Shields said. He said the group continues to uncover forgotten links to the district's past in people's attics, garages or closets.

Paul Long, 80, of Yukon has a complete collection of the Pirate Log, the Putnam City High School newspaper, from the 1944-45 school year. Long was an editor of the paper.

Some of his articles didn't go over well with the football team that year, he said.

"I wrote editorials trying to point out that there was more to school than sports," Long said. "It caused a lot of friction with the football boys."

He said players were so upset at one editorial they jumped sports editor John B. McCaleb and held him down, forcing him to eat one of Long's articles.

Shields said he hopes the museum will become a "lifelong learning center."

Rodgers said the group has not set a date for opening the preservation center. Anyone who wants to volunteer or make a donation can call Rodgers at 721-5531 or Apgar at 946-3382 or go to www.pchs4allyears.com