



Hundreds awed with look inside new Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
December 4 2015 7:10 PM





EDWARDSVILLE - A sneak peek after Lewis and Clark Community College opened the new Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities (MJCH) Thursday night in the former Lincoln School building in Edwardsville was received with much “awe” and “anticipation” by a large crowd.

Different leaders from business, government, education and the private sector toured the renovated building and had snacks and drinks Thursday and all expressed amazement at the transformation of the facility.

The renovation of the old Lincoln School Building is the first of several phases with the new complex. The plan is to include not only the old Lincoln School location but a 1,200-seat conference center, hotel, parking garage and STEM Center.

Dr. Ed Hightower, the executive director of the Mannie Jackson Center for Humanities Foundation, said he kept hearing the words, “wow” from everyone who came through, which was very gratifying to him.

“This is just a great day for Mannie Jackson and Lewis and Clark Community College and the entire area,” he said. “This center will be a place to push discussion around respect, civility, understanding and forgiveness. We will have speakers from all over the country starting with Colin Powell on March 31. We have a lot of programs planned for young people in our schools working through Regional Superintendent Bob Daiber’s office.”

Hightower said when a person looks at how polarized factions are throughout the country it is so important to have the kinds of discussions that will occur at the new center.

Lewis and Clark Community College President **Dale Chapman** said he loves how the new facility has turned out, including many art works on the wall.

“It is a very exciting day because it has been the vision to have this center that would be an image in Mannie Jackson’s vision for looking at a country increasingly polarized and how we can find common ground and involve the next generation for the next century,” he said. “Also repurposing the old Lincoln School is taking a symbol of the region and reshaping it for something incredible. This is important for the future of the region and already there has been incredible work done here. This is another example of an older building being repurposed and reused. We have had some wonderful art come in and it is light and airy and a hopeful place.”



Elsie McCabe Thompson, who heads one of the oldest anti poverty societies in the country, the New York Missions Society, said she believes the architecture used in the building has preserved its historical value.

“I like the exposed brick building with history and character,” she said. “It is going to be phenomenal what it means to Edwardsville and the rest of the country.”

Charlotte Johnson, a historian and leader in racial equality, works throughout the area and beyond and said the building is simply “beautiful.” “I think it will be well used,” she said. “It is like a new day for the building.”

Madison County Board Chairman **Alan Dunstan** said he was once in the building when it was a fraternity house and had gone downhill and the transformation is astounding.

“I think this whole first phase is a plus and it will help Edwardsville and the whole county,” he said. “There are a lot of good things going on in Madison County and this is one of them with quite a few more coming ahead.”

Alton Branch of the NAACP President **James Gray** said the new building is “wonderful.”

“They have the right people in place to make sure it does the right thing,” he said. “Something like this has been needed. I have known Ed since he was in high school and he is a great person. This is just great what has happened here.”

Lori Artis, a vice president of administration at Lewis and Clark Community College couldn’t say enough for the transformation and she said she is so hopeful of what will take place in the future as the entire complex develops.

“There is a great history here,” she said. “This is just Phase One of many phases of the project and it will have a huge impact on the region and the people we serve.”

Joan and Chuck Sheppard have worked with Dr. Hightower since he was a principal at Alton High School on a variety of projects and are financial contributors to the new center.

“Dr. Hightower has had a wonderful career,” she said. “We are both excited about the future of the center and the people it will serve.”

SEE RELATED VIDEO BELOW:

SEE PHOTO GALLERY FROM LOOK INSIDE NEW CENTER:



