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NEW-AND-IMPROVED POOL IN THE WORKS FOR PELICAN RAPIDS

January 13, 2021

By Heather Rule

Kate Woolever-Martinez grew up in Pelican Rapids and spent plenty of time at the Pelican Rapids Community Pool. “The pool was just where everybody went,” Woolever-Martinez said. “And even when we were kids, it was falling apart.”

The pool opened in 1978 and was supposed to last 35 years; the age shows, said Woolever-Martinez, chair of the Pelican Rapids pool committee. The pool leaks 8,000 gallons of water a day! A 2012 structural study recommended the pool's closure, but it remains open because it's such a draw for kids. The pool served more than 2,500 guests in 2018.

Still, the pool is not ADA compliant. The kiddie pool was shut down a couple of years ago "because it's just shot," Woolever-Martinez said.

The pool committee held public meetings throughout the design process to reach the new complex design, which is supported by the community. Fundraising started in April 2019 with a goal of raising \$3.7 million to fully fund the demolition of the old pool and build the new eco-friendly facility on the same site.

A bath house will also be moved on the property so it can be dual-functioning to serve both the city campground and pool. A gazebo and more deck space allow for larger gatherings.

Plans also call for the addition of a water slide, lazy river, diving board and basketball hoop in the pool. Adding a splash pad and zero-entry depth pool will help families with young children enjoy the pool too, according to Woolever-Martinez. That's much better than the current set-up with the kiddie pool located farther away from the main pool. This is so much more inclusive, Woolever-Martinez said. That's a huge priority to make sure it's inclusive for everybody, she added.

Building community, inclusion and safety, and healthy living are the three pillars of the project that have helped propel it as a need for the community. With such a diverse community – more than 14 languages are spoken – the pool committee referred to the project as a "multicultural aquatic facility," Woolever-Martinez said. The pool is a hub of everybody coming together, she added. "There's just certain places that bring all diversities, all ages, all races together, and the pool is one of them," she said.

People often call the pool “daycare,” because so many kids bike or walk to the pool throughout the summer, Woolever-Martinez said. They arrive in the morning and stay until closing. As one of two outdoor pools in Otter Tail County, it draws in people from throughout the region.

“The pool is really the heart of our summer for our kids,” Woolever-Martinez said.

For more information or to donate: PelicanRapidsPool.com

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