

Vennard Campus to become local community resource
October 21, 2009
Joe Crookham

The 72 acre Vennard College campus will become a community resource serving a wide range of local area needs and purposes. The 9 buildings, large grass and wooded areas, along with soccer fields and the popular miniature golf course, offer many potential values for community benefit. Joe Crookham, President of Musco Lighting announced today that the property has been purchased with the goal of making it a facility for local community uses.

The intent is to create a Community Facility Foundation as a new charitable entity which will be supported by Musco and other local support. The purpose of the foundation is to help fund acquisition and operation of facilities in the community for public purposes with the continued and expanded involvement of a cross section of local organizations and people.

The Vennard purchase opportunity, together with other community facility acquisitions, has created a need to establish a method for the community to become more effectively involved in planning for the use and management of these facilities. We will begin to explore ways to establish a community based board to guide, and to take responsibilities for the effective use of these properties.

The most immediate community use will be the Vennard gymnasium which will provide a permanent home for the YMCA's gymnastics program where they can both practice and hold competitive spectator events.

The proximity of the Vennard wooded area to the new Caldwell Nature Center of Mahaska County Conservation, offers some very unique potential learning and fun experience opportunities for youth and families. The 17,000 square foot Student Center building is relatively new and has great facilities and the potential to be used in several valuable ways. Various other buildings can likely be economically updated to provide value for various community purposes.

We want to build on 40 years of experience and meet today's challenges to be a sustainable community effectively participating and competing in fast changing world where Beijing China is only 3 thousandths of a second from Oskaloosa by Internet.

The PAL group, now MCRF, has been around for 40 years, and the George Daily Family Trust has been in existence for more than 15 years. Both operate as broad based programs serving the local community. It now seems the appropriate time to add a group to help guide community facility planning and development for community purposes.

The renovated Iowa Building overlooking our beautiful Town Square provides a focal point for the future of our downtown. Our recently new and remodeled school buildings,

together with the George Daily Auditorium, are a strong statement about our school system. John F. Lacey Park highlights the Northwest area of the community as it provides valuable recreational facilities. New buildings and growth of William Penn University strengthen educational options and attract many new young people to our community.

We have a lot going for our Community and now is a great opportunity to move on to become a viable part of a fast changing World with amazing new challenges and potential for everyone. We anticipate that the Vennard facilities, which have housed college operations with a long tradition of serving the community, will continue to provide healthy growth for our communities.