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Arts center shows off all its bells and whistles

The new Kannapolis Performing of the Arts Center was christened in style Sunday afternoon with a grand open house featuring more than 200 entertainers.

Although the name is new, the location is not. It's actually the A.L. Brown auditorium, after a high-gloss, million-dollar-plus makeover.

Last weekend's free event featured ballerinas, a banjo player, dancers, singers, a pianist, a string quartet, church choirs and the A.L. Brown band and chorus.

Audiences now can enjoy new theatre-style seating, state-of-the-art lighting and sound, a modern electronic flyer system that can accommodate DVD PowerPoint presentations.

Performers can appreciate the new stage curtains, flooring, carpet and paint, as well as renovated dressing rooms. A concert quality grand piano has been rolled onto the stage.

The facility seats about 2,000 and also can pipe sound and video into the school cafeteria to accommodate overflowing seating.

The renovation took about a year to complete and cost \$1.5 million. The money came from taxpayer-approved bonds and the private Cannon Foundation.

If the past is any indication, the new space will be well used. More than a million people have used the auditorium since it was built 50 years ago, Kannapolis schools spokesperson Ellen Boyd said.

Because the facility is “a jewel for our community” and much more than a school auditorium, it needed the new name, Kannapolis City Schools Superintendent JoAnne Byerly said.

The open house also featured two new building and additions to the A.L. Brown campus off East First Street: the Activity Fitness Center and the renovated school system administrative office building.

The fitness center has an auxiliary gymnasium, weight rooms, locker rooms, and classrooms. The office building includes a new school board meeting room, seminar rooms and additional office space.