



Katelyn Estepp, Taylor Schanz, Veronica Wiewiora and Nicholas Wiewiora sample the refreshments at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.



The new cafeteria features warm colors and stainless steel mobile serving stations.

Clarenceville closes campus for lunch, opens new \$1.5 million cafeteria

By Karen Smith
Observer Staff Writer

Clarenceville High School students Harry Zhen and Kelly Wilson don't like that they won't be able to leave campus for lunch this school year, but they like the new \$1.5 million cafete-

ria they'll be eating in. "It's amazing," said Zhen, a senior, of the 6,000-square-foot cafeteria with big-screen televisions and wifi access built on the school's former courtyard. "This is very well-executed. It was not what I expected." "I think it looks really

great," said Wilson, a junior. "It's bigger and it doesn't have just tables but cocktail-type tables." Zhen and Wilson viewed the cafeteria for the first time last week, during a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by school board members, Livonia May-

or Jack Kirksey, state Rep. John Walsh, R-Livonia, other dignitaries, students and parents. The Clarenceville School District serves students in a portion of Farmington Hills. School board Vice President Matt Boettcher said he had been wanting to close

the campus for lunch since he was first elected in 1997. "As a lawyer, you see liability everywhere," he said, of the dangers of letting students drive to and from restaurants during the middle of the school day, with them often getting back to school late. But there were two problems: tradition and space, he said.

goes unnoticed by the community." He said the general contractor, Braun Construction Group of Farmington Hills, worked with integrity and speed. "We told you we'd be ready for school," he said.

Design based on wish list

Superintendent Pamela Swert said the cafeteria was built based on a wish list created by the community a year ago.

"This is what you were telling us you wanted," she said.

The cafeteria, designed by French & Associates, seats 310 and is large enough to feed all the students in two shifts. Part of the courtyard remains, where students can go outside to eat when the weather is nice.

School board President Sharon Simpson said the cafeteria, decorated in the school colors of red, white and gray, will also be used as a multi-purpose room for staff and community meetings.

"We tried to make it more hip, nice and bright," she said.

It was financed with money from the district's 4.5-mill sinking fund, approved by voters in 2006.

Since the district will be serving more students, it will be hiring the equivalent of 2½ additional full-time people at the high school, said David Bergeron, assistant superintendent for business and finance.

It will also be revamping its lunch program to meet new federal nutrition standards and broaden the selection, he said.

As a result, lunch prices at the high school and middle school will increase from \$2.50 to \$2.75, at the elementary level from \$2.25 to \$2.40.

Zhen said that while he likes the new cafeteria, he'll have to wait and see what he thinks of the new cafeteria food.

"That's still a mystery right now," he said.

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