

New Faulkner Amphitheater is Latest Addition to Downtown Fairhope

by D. Fran Morley

The long anticipated amphitheater at Faulkner State Community College in Fairhope is finally open. The Alabama Coastal BirdFest Bird & Conservation Expo was the first event scheduled for the new space, as part of the Fall into Fairhope weekend (October 3–4) that also welcomes the Grand Festival of Books and Grand Fest of Art to the tree-shaded Faulkner State campus.

“The amphitheater will be used by community events and organizations, such as BirdFest and Arts & Crafts, but it also will be used to support music and drama productions of the College,” said Sara Godwin, director of public relations and marketing at Faulkner State Community College. “We have a theater program and several musical groups at Faulkner State that could use the amphitheater. We also have an animation, interactive technology, video graphics, and visual effects program that allows students to create their own short films and videos. This amphitheater will allow them to showcase their work, as well.”

Located on the southeast corner of the Faulkner State campus in downtown Fairhope, the amphitheater idea began with conversations between the College and the Fairhope Center for the Arts Council, discussing the need for a facility to host fine arts events that could include anything from elementary to college productions, to large-scale theatrical and musical productions, such as a concert by Mobile Symphony.

“The amphitheater was designed to mesh with the Fairhope atmosphere that highly supports the arts, including music and theater,” Godwin said. “The facility was situated to face downtown Fairhope. Visitors to the amphitheater can easily walk from downtown to the Fairhope Faulkner State campus, which is known for its greenery and visually stunning layout.”

Designed by Walcott Adams Verneuille Architects and funded through a combination of College funds and generous donations made by local organizations, groups, and private donors, the amphitheater stage is equipped with a loading dock for trucks and groups to unload equipment as

well as men's and women's changing rooms for those using the facility. Including the stage, the amphitheater totals 2,380 square feet. Stone columns and fencing around the perimeter help preserve open space while allowing for potential contained-area events. There are restrooms at the main gate entrance. "The open-air design encourages visitors to enjoy festivities by spreading out their blanket in the grass or enjoying the show from comfortable lawn chairs," Godwin said. The facility can accommodate up to 300 people sitting in the grass on blankets or lawn chairs, but the area can support nearly 10,000 people at events that are standing-room only.

A formal grand opening will be held at a date to be announced, according to the College. "We hope people in Fairhope and the surrounding area will support events here and see the benefit of this beautiful new addition to the Faulkner State campus and to downtown Fairhope," Godwin said.

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