



PROGRESS at BCHS!!!

All of the windows in the 1914 building are secured. Materials were provided by the Bent County Preservation Society and the work was done by the prison crew at Fort Lyon, at no cost. The crew also cleaned, painted and repaired areas in the 1939 annex. The plan to rehabilitate and reuse the complex—the 1947 Ag building/shop, the 1939 annex and the 1914 building—is being revised. The buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and on the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties. The Bent County/Las Animas Community Center is now operating in the 1939 Annex. It is wonderful to see the lights on there and people going in and out, using the facility.

The partnership between the county, city, school district and community groups has made this happen. Now, the partners are applying to the Colorado Brownfields Foundation for the grant to clean and secure the interior of the 1914 building, and we need to raise funds to continue to make the entire complex a twenty-first century community center. Grants outlined in the original feasibility study are still available, but to apply, we must have matching funds. Matching funds from the county, the community, and organizations like BCPS, show foundations such as the Boettcher Foundation, Gates Foundation and the State Historical Fund, that we all are committed to the project.

We care about preserving and using our historic buildings, thereby making life better in Las Animas and Bent County. Studies show that in cities and counties where historic properties are rehabilitated and reused, the economics of those places have improved. In the bleak economy that Bent County faces now, it would be impossible to build a complex to house services such as a community center, offices for social services, a senior center, a tourism clearinghouse, or a library. Fortunately, such a complex already exists and we are on the way to making it usable. With the help of alumni, Bent County citizens, civic and charitable groups, preservation organizations such as the State Historic Fund and Colorado Preservation Inc., the County, the City of Las Animas, and the Las Animas School District, we will find a re-use for the old high school building, integrating a variety of services in the entire center.

