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Pavilion donation to keep party alive

By Brian Walzel, Potpourri Staff Writer

When the Magnolia Historical Society moved its landmark depot station from along FM 1774 to its current location on Melton Street, the main entertainment stage for the annual Depot Days was lost in the reconfiguration. As the society debated ways to adopt a new entertainment venue, one local business owner decided to provide a facility that far exceeded the society's hopes and plans.

When the society approached Bob Hawthorne, owner of Magnolia's Hawthorne Steel Buildings, about plans to build a quaint gazebo, Hawthorne decided to provide the society, free of charge, with a 30-foot by 30-foot covered pavilion.

"We appreciate it very deeply," said Johnny Rollins, Chairman of the Magnolia Historical Society. "Bob's a good Christian man."

Plans call for the pavilion to have a concrete base with a 10-foot by 30-foot stage. Although an exact location has yet to be determined, Rollins said the building is likely to be constructed near the depot and adjacent to the Blue Iguana restaurant on Buddy Riley Blvd. Rollins said Montgomery County has agreed to put in the dirt foundation which will support the pavilion.

According to Rollins, the pavilion will be available for the entire Magnolia community to utilize.

As the society presented its plans to Hawthorne, he saw bigger and better things for the community.

"I am very pleased to be able to give this pavilion to the Magnolia Historical Society," Hawthorne said. "I believe that the people of Magnolia and surrounding areas will be able to enjoy the pavilion for a long, long time."

Previously, entertainment for the society's annual Depot Days was staged on the depot's loading dock.

But when the depot was relocated, the former stage was not in a prime position for entertainment acts, Rollins said. It was then the society began to discuss their options. According to Hawthorne, construction could begin on the new pavilion in March with a completion time frame of three or four days.

The plans are for the pavilion to be completed before this year's Depot Days celebration, tentatively scheduled for April 22.

Hawthorne said the opportunity to be a part of the Magnolia community is an important one to his company.

"Our goal is to not only become an integral part of this community, but also to be a leader in supporting this community," he said.

Rollins said the society works on a relatively limited budget and much of the work is provided by area volunteers.

Society members are currently seeking items to include in the depot's museum.

The building currently houses a number of artifacts from Magnolia's past, including several items utilized national rail lines.

"We try to give people an idea of Magnolia's history," Rollins said.

E-mail Brian Walzel at bwalzel@hcnonline.net