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PIERCE • Daily Leader

Renovations were recently finished in the Seward County Community College/Area Technical School Showcase Theater.

A welcome donation to the SCCC/ATS Development Foundation was the driving force for the renovation. The theater now has four handicap accessible areas, new carpet, new chairs and new front drapes, as well as a new sound system.

“With his large (anonymous) donation, we were able to go ahead and revamp the theater to be in tune with the school colors, which was wonderful,” said drama director Frank Challis. “We were able to make some nice improvements that we probably wouldn’t have been able to had this person not donated the money for the cause. It was time to upgrade some of those things anyway. It really was wonderful to not have to foot the whole bill.”

Renovations began last year and were just finished during Thanksgiving break, according to Challis.

“It was installed after the play was over,” he said referring to the recent production of Neil Simon’s “Fools.” “The play was before Thanksgiving. The sound system got installed just in time for the Christmas concert. The lights were finished just afterwards, too. We got some new lighting boards backstage and upstage in the microphone booth.”

Challis said TSI Theatrical Services of Wichita did a majority of the work on the Showcase Theater, and a local contractor did the sound system.

The drama director said much of the theater had not been upgraded since the building was first built in 1974.

“The building was finished in 1974 with the original theater,” he said. “Some of the things we

had done had not been upgraded since that time, and we haven't had a new main curtain in the theater since 1992."

Challis said he has received many compliments from the community on how much better programs can be heard and how much better the theater looks.

"We get comments all the time on how much prettier it looks and that people like the green, which is the school colors," he said.

Challis said the theater is now also wheelchair accessible.

"It was upgraded for handicap people that need wheelchairs," he said.

New isle lights were also installed in the theater to help people find their way without falling.

"That's a wonderful improvement, too," Challis said.

He said future improvements on the Showcase Theater will mainly be upkeep and small additions.

"We've done most of the major improvements," he said. "We should be good to go for the next 15 years or more."

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