

Use of four gyms has created some problems for school district

Story and photos by Judy Hill of The INDEPENDENT.

With the completion of the new Banks Elementary School in Sept. 1998 and the Banks Junior High addition in Sept. 1999, the Banks district campus now has four gyms being used heavily by both students and community. Problems have begun to crop up since the gyms have been opened for use on Saturdays, when building supervision is not available.

The previous facilities were barely sufficient for school use and precluded community use, said Superintendent Marilyn McGlasson. "The new gyms have allowed us to attempt to meet the needs of all school and community youth groups, as well as adult use for volleyball, aerobics and pick-up games. These are community facilities, paid for with community taxes," she said.

Weekdays, there is custodial staff on duty from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. The buildings are unlocked and locked, cleaned and supervised during these hours. Masterful scheduling has been accomplished by athletic director Jim Foster on the school side and parent-volunteer David Updyke for community youth sports activities, said Jr. High Principal Ted Faro.

Demand has become so great that the district has been allowing community use of facilities on Saturdays, even though there is no paid supervision on weekends. Security issues involve who will open and close the buildings, turn off

lights, clean and generally keep an eye on things. In this age of heightened school security, keys can't be handed out to all comers. There is also the need to protect the investment the community has made in these facilities.

Additionally, McGlasson says, there have been instances of minor vandalism and disturbing evidence of kids running wild with no supervision inside the school buildings on Saturdays. Basketballs have been found all over the buildings, food has been spilled on floors, kickball has been played with basketballs in the hallways, bathrooms have been trashed, a table broken and some classroom materials have been tampered with.

Child safety is an issue, too. McGlasson said parents need to be aware of where their children are and that even though the schools are open for specific community sports events, children who are not participating in those events will be unsupervised. Community program coaches have no authority or responsibility except as coaches for their events.

Weekend supervision of four facilities is not in the budget, unless money is moved from some other area, perhaps to supervise just one gym, said McGlasson.

"The district is trying to figure out how to balance maximum use with supervision, safety and protection of our investment," she said. "Meanwhile, we need help and understanding from the community."



This gym at Banks Junior High School teemed with people in a photo taken during the recent district wrestling tournament.

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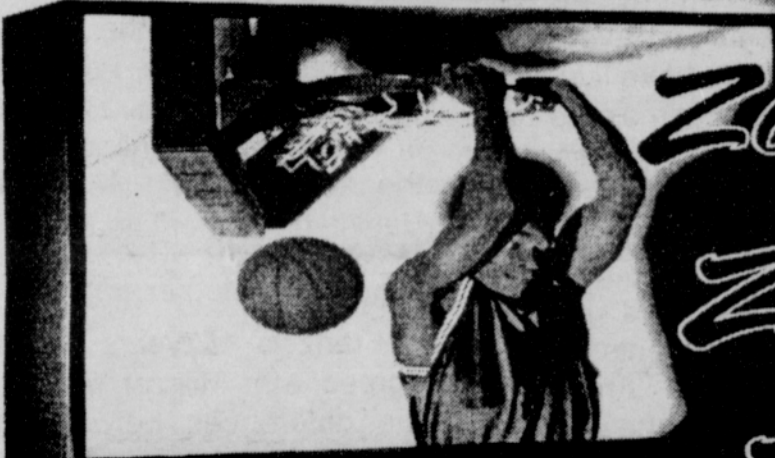
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