

# Honoring those helping to bring new life to Ogden High auditorium

---

<http://www.standard.net/stories/2011/08/17/honoring-those-helping-bring-new-life-ogden-high-auditorium%23.TqVw0r4E4ug.printfriendly>

October 24, 2011

OGDEN -- Donors and dignitaries gathered Wednesday night for a reception to honor those who helped fund the restoration of Ogden High School's ornate Art Deco auditorium.

About 1,000 people and groups donated the \$8.8 million raised so far for the room's historic preservation, seismic upgrade and technical modernization.

Alan Hall, OHS class of '63, cochair of the fundraising committee and a major donor himself, joked that he was sealing the doors until the audience of 400 or so coughed up the final \$200,000 needed for the project.

In thanks for one generous donation, the space will now be called the Spencer F. Eccles Auditorium, named for the Ogden High alumnus, Wells Fargo chairman emeritus and chairman and CEO of the George S. and Dolores Doris Eccles Foundation.

Chuck James lead the team of restoration artists worked for months to reproduce the auditorium to its original Art Deco glory, with pastel and jewel tone details and flourishes.

"I'm very pleased to see the gratitude for the donors who made this happen," James said. "It just shows you the kind of people who are here, supporting this project."

James said that usually, finding funding for historic preservation, "is like pulling teeth, but these days you could pull teeth and you still wouldn't get what you needed."

The auditorium's original gold-colored leafing was done in Dutch metal, a cheaper substitute for the real thing.

"I wanted to use real gold," James recalled. "I almost didn't ask, but when I did, someone donated \$25,000 within 24 hours. The gold leafing looks brighter than it ever has, and it will still look this good in 70 years."

Rob White, a OHS class of '72 alumnus who cochairs the fundraising committee with Hall, said he worried the project might never get off the ground.

"I wondered when the economy crashed six months in if we would ever make it to this point," he said. "But look at it. I'm stunned. It's better than new. It's unbelievable how beautiful it is."

Dean Hurst, of the Stewart Education Foundation, OHS class of '44, said the old theater never looked so good, when he studied theater at Ogden High or in 1965 when he returned to play Professor Harold Hill in "The Music Man," with the musical's creator, Meredith Willson, in the audience, looking on.

"I have a lot of tender memories in this room," Hurst said. "I was delighted when the foundation was given the opportunity to participate in the renovation."

The Stewart Education Foundation was the largest donor, giving \$1.2 million.

Another OHS alumnus, Utah Lt. Gov. Greg Bell, was among the speakers in a short program that included a video and live performances by Ogden High's choir, band and cheerleaders.

James said it was an honor to work on the auditorium due to the quality of the original work.

Many of the craftsmen who created the space in the late 1930s were European artists who first came to Utah to work on temples for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"You just don't see this kind of work, especially in a high school," James said. "Maybe in a theater in New York."

James said he hopes to retire soon, and Ogden High School's auditorium will be one of his last jobs.

"And this is one to remember."