



SHINING EFFIE'S JEWEL

CAIN CENTER CELEBRATES 30 YEARS

By Toni Garrard Clay

When Tere Lawyer was recruited last year to be executive director of the Cain Center, the first thing she did was roll up her sleeves. The governing board members chose Lawyer to lead the charge to rejuvenate the flagging community treasure, and charge, she has.

September marks the 30th anniversary since the Cain Foundation donated the facility to the people of Henderson County. "Effie Cain gave the Cain Center in honor of her husband, Wofford, because he loved Henderson County, and he loved the people here. She wanted it to be here for generations to come," said Lawyer. "We had allowed the shine to wear off over the years, and it was time to shine our pretty little jewel up again."

The shining initially took the form of good, old-fashioned elbow grease. Bathroom and light fixtures were replaced. The building closed for a week for extensive repainting. New carpet was laid. The concrete floors were stripped and re-waxed. New, more energy efficient solar screens were installed on windows. Landscaping was overhauled.

"The response from people was amazing," said Lawyer. "They were very happy."

A deep cleaning, however, is not sufficient to meet the Cain Center's needs. "Our goal is to become self-sustaining, so that we're able to take care of ourselves without asking for money from foundations," said Lawyer. "We're closer this year than we've ever been."

The ultimate goal for the board and for Lawyer is to implement major (and therefore costly) improvements to the Cain Center. "We want to go out and ask the public to help make that possible, but we don't feel like we can or should do that until we demonstrate we are a viable, supportable entity. Once we can say we're self-sustaining — through programs and memberships and rentals and all the things it takes to make a facility like ours work — then we can go out and say, 'It's time to fix the 30-year-old air conditioning system; we need better lighting; we need a salt water system in our pool.'"

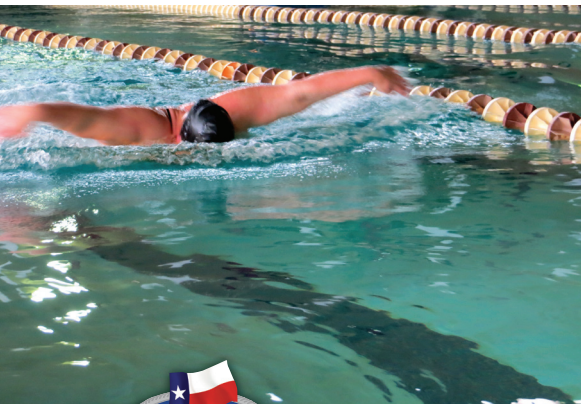
The Cain Center hosts a full and growing roster of programs, including the very popular futsal league. Futsal is indoor soccer played in a gym, and every Monday and Wednesday the gym is packed until about 11 p.m. "We're about to start a Sunday afternoon futsal youth group," said Lawyer. "It's been a wonderful program for us."





In addition, there are fitness classes such as Zumba, Yoga Fusion, Silver Sneakers and an H2O water boot camp. The Cain Center has also become home to a 40-hour beginning electrical class, as well as for the Sylvan Learning Center. "We've seen amazing results from the Sylvan classes," said Lawyer. "Kids come in here with their heads hung low and finish the course happy."

One of the things Lawyer said she most dislikes seeing is empty space. "We want to keep the place in use all the time," she said. "In the past year, we've seen an amazing increase in the amount of activity at the center, and that makes me happy."



Though located in Athens, the Cain Center, she stressed, is for all the people of Henderson County. "In her speech, Effie Cain said the reason she dedicated the Cain Center to Wofford is that he grew up here and always loved the people of Henderson County. She didn't just say Athens; she said Henderson County."

Cain Center Board President Steve Grant echoed that sentiment when he wrote in an editorial piece, "Even though many of us can remember a time without the Cain Center, it has been such a central part of our city's and county's fabric that it is difficult to imagine life without [it]."

"The Cain Center belongs to all of us," said Lawyer. "We drive people here to show them what we have, and then we drive home and tend to forget about it. It belongs to us; we need to take ownership of it, and we need to use it."

For information about the Cain Center, including rentals on its five rooms and multi-purpose hall, visit caincenterinc.org or call 903-677-2000. The building is open Monday-Friday, 5 a.m.-9 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m.-6 p.m. and Sunday 1 p.m.-6 p.m.

