



Pin Lim / For the Chronicle

Renovations of the Sylvan Beach Pavilion are nearing completion, thanks to work by members of the Friends of Sylvan Beach Park & Pavilion: Stan Sherwood, left, Raj Shafaii, Norma Shafaii, Dave Klingman, Carole Henning, Ken Proctor, Kathryn Aguilar, Kim Powell, Ted Powell, Carl Rentz, Dawn Harris and Cynthia Neely.

SYLVAN BEACH Pavilion restored to glory

By Flori Meeks

La Porte resident Ted Powell recently registered a new domain name for Friends of Sylvan Beach Park & Pavilion.

The website has been www.savethepavilion.org, but that doesn't really apply any more and will be changed to sbpavilion.org later this year.

Owner Harris County Precinct 2 is renovating the 1956 pavilion that the organization has been working to protect from demolition, and the county is negotiating with a prospective operator to run it after the work is done. By late summer, the facility could be hosting private celebrations, concerts and dances.

"It's been a five-year process here, but all in all, the outcome is excellent," he said. "The building has not only been saved from demolition, the

renovations are looking better and better."

The 10,000-square-foot glass-walled ballroom at 1 Sylvan Beach Drive will maintain its original design, but with hurricane-resistant features. The \$4.9 million renovation project was designed by Kirksey Architecture. SpawGlass is the contractor.

"I'm proud we saved Sylvan Beach Pavilion and restored it to its former glory," Harris County Precinct 2 Commissioner Jack Morman said. "We expect it to open in late August or September for public and private events. I want to thank Ted Powell and the Friends of Sylvan Beach Pavilion for all their help and tenacity in bringing the pavilion back to life. It has meant a lot to our part of Harris County for over 50 years."

Morman said he envisions the pavilion resuming its role as

a focal point for community life.

"The pavilion will be a great community gathering place for dances, reunions, weddings, birthday parties and so on. Andi and I can't wait for that first dance," he added, referring to his wife.

The pavilion has a new entryway, exterior paint and window glazing that has been approved by the Texas Historical Commission, Powell said.

Workers have replaced the air conditioning and heating systems, the roof, the plumbing, the electrical system, the bathrooms, brickwork, some of the steel work and the deck.

"This is the first serious, total renovation since the pavilion was built," Powell said.

The county also has been adding landscaping.

Once renovations are complete, Raj Shafaii, a candidate

Pavilion continues on 6

Pavilion served as focal point

Pavilion from page 1

to operate the facility, is hoping to outfit the site for private and public events. Shafaii, a former structural engineer who now owns a banquet hall business, lived in La Porte for a while as a youth and was fascinated with the pavilion.

"I always dreamed of designing a large structure like that," Shafaii said. "If someone told me I might be operating and managing this facility, I wouldn't have believed them.

"I want the pavilion to be a hub for all sorts of activities — political activities, cultural activities, social activities — not only for the La

Fundraiser

What: The Friends of Sylvan Beach Park & Pavilion will host The Moonlight Madness Ball **When:** 8-11 p.m. Saturday, June 8

Where: SPJST Pasadena Ballroom, 3609 Preston. **Admission:** Tickets are \$50 per couple in advance and \$60 at the door.

Details: To pre-purchase tickets, visit www.savethepavilion.org/savethepavilion/Moonlight_Madness_Ball.html

Porte area, but for greater Houston."

The Friends hope to raise awareness of the pavilion and raise money to enhance the lighting and sound systems and possibly a marquee.

It's Powell's hope that the pavilion will make full use of its 3,600-square-foot ballroom.

"Sylvan Beach was always known as a dance venue," he said, adding that he'd love local dance and senior groups to be able to use the facility during the day.

The site also could host public dances on the weekends and concert events.

The Friends also will work to keep the pavilion's history alive and

accessible to the community. One option, Powell said, would be a display case filled with photos, newspaper clippings and artifacts.

"Rice Hotel, the Shamrock Hotel and Sylvan Beach Pavilion — those were the three big venues for Houston entertainment."

The pavilion was considered a regional destination for decades before it fell into disrepair and then was damaged by Hurricane Ike in 2008.

La Porte, the pavilion's lessee, turned it over to the county, and there were plans for a while to demolish the facility and use the property for other purposes.

Powell already had been working to protect the facility and stepped up his efforts.

The pavilion later was designated a National Historic Building, a State Archeological Landmark and a Recorded Texas Historical Landmark, which offered protection and led to federal funds for the renovation. About \$4.6 million is from Hurricane Ike Recovery Funds and the rest is from precinct park bonds.

Flori Meeks is a freelance writer who can be reached at flori@swbell.net

CITY OF LA PORTE SOLICITATION REQUESTS:

City of La Porte Sealed Solicitation: Sealed Bid #13019 — La Porte FY 2013 Street Overlay Project will be accepted until 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 11, 2013. Solicitations will be opened and publicly read immediately following the closing hour at 604 W. Fairmont Parkway, La Porte, TX 77571. For information to register and bid, visit: www.laportetx.gov. For questions, contact purchasing@laportetx.gov.



The Foot Doctor

1980 to 2010, has averaged 3.3 percent annually, from 277,305 to 567,740. Of that, 223,000 or 40 percent of the total population is Hispanic, up from 40,000 or 7 percent in 1980, the report

dustries Inc., another Houston based company, is also seeing an increase in business. One of the upcoming projects involves an exterior renovation of 400

Growth continues on 6

LEAGUE CITY

Quilter labors with love to comfort vets

By Tom Robinson