

Rising from the ashes



LEN LEHMAN — MERCURY NEWS

Construction of the exterior of the Felton Community Center has been completed, but funds are needed to complete the interior.

Felton - 1990

SJmn 5-15-96

Felton town center nears completion

BY TERRI MORGAN
Special to the Mercury News

Volunteers rebuilding the Felton Community Hall hope to have the new town center ready for partial occupancy by the sixth anniversary of the Aug. 9, 1990 fire that destroyed the original building.

Construction work on the exterior of the community center in downtown Felton has been completed, and crews should be finishing up the meeting room, hallways, lobby and bathrooms soon, said Gene Martin, a Felton Community Club volunteer who is overseeing the project. The non-profit

group will seek a partial use permit to begin using a 64-person capacity meeting room, while it looks for funding to finish and furnish the auditorium and kitchen, Martin said.

The group needs about \$160,000 to complete construction and buy kitchen equipment, tables, chairs for the meeting room and the 265-person capacity auditorium, interior lighting, stage curtains and other furnishings, said Jim Bricken, who recently succeeded Martin as president of the Felton Community Hall board of directors. Bricken estimated the total cost of the

rebuilding project at \$700,500.

After a lawsuit, the club received \$292,000 in insurance claims on the original building. Santa Cruz County paid \$100,000 for use of the building as an emergency disaster center during the next 30 years. Fund-raisers brought in \$95,700, and individuals and businesses contributed more than \$55,000 worth of labor and materials. Volunteers are needed to bolster the ranks, and help raise funds for the final phase of the project, Bricken said.

"The last phase is the hardest," he said.

See **HALL**, Page 2B

Felton center nearly ready for occupancy

■ HALL

from Page 1B

The original Felton Community Hall was built in 1925, and was used by several generations of San Lorenzo Valley residents. Inexpensive to rent, the hall, at Highway 9 and Kirby Street in downtown Felton, was in use constantly. Run by a non-profit Felton Community Hall board of directors, the wooden meeting hall was the site of thousands of town dances, meetings, forums, pageants, weddings and benefit fund-raisers.

Its loss left Felton residents without a meeting center. Once the exterior work was completed, people began calling about booking the building.

"It's starting to look pretty good," Martin said. "Everybody wants to use it now."

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED

The Felton Community Hall club meets the second Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Felton Fire Station, 131 Kirby St.