



No bones about it

Hohenfels teachers, students excited about completion of combined middle/high school

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Photos by Brian H. Temple

Students buzzed around the school decorating everything in sight in the school colors. Blue and white appeared on lockers, doors, trophy cases, in stairways and hallways, even on students' faces. Their school spirit still glowed from the previous night's homecoming bonfire.

The staff seemed excited too, but the day's events provided more than the average homecoming morale boost. Senior staff, faculty, teachers, and guests were cutting a ribbon that morning, commemorating the completion of their new \$12-million school.

Construction firm Klebl, the Staatsliches Hochbauamt Regensburg, and the U.S. Army

Corps of Engineers Europe District constructed the facility holding more than 300 students. The facility has a gym, locker rooms, and a track and field. There are also state-of-the-art additions such as Computer Aided Design and Drafting, digital photography labs, and a music room.

"The facility is a tremendous improvement over the conditions we had previously worked in," David Carlisle, Assistant Principal of the new Hohenfels combined Middle and High School, said. "Students finally feel that they have 'a school.'"

The school replaces an outdated facility Europe District and the Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS) put together in 1994, a temporary



Esteya Chirunga (far right) gets a chance with her friends to mug for the camera following the grand opening.



The school color guard was on hand to open the ceremony.

high school consisting of several converted buildings. The facility was composed of quickly constructed additions, and the staff relied on borrowed furniture and "cannibalized" equipment and furnishings.

The conglomeration also served as the local elementary and middle schools.

Hans Hirschmann, the Europe District project engineer, worked on the previous configuration, but said DoDDS had wanted to build a much better facility for more than 10 years. He also had oversight during this new construction.

Hirschmann said with mild winters, and the contractor's money management savvy, the school was delivered ahead of schedule and below budget. Additions and changes usually raise a project's costs, but this project equaled itself out, Hirschmann said, mostly because of money saving proposals made by the contractor on materials.

Carlisle said the new facility was designed with an infrastructure to support new learning and

educational systems and includes a sophisticated LAN system, Closed Circuit Television, and power to keep it all going. "We also have enhanced security and communication with telephones and intercoms in every room," Carlisle said. "The hallways are spacious. ... It is open, and the large amount of glass lets in lots of natural light."

Hirschmann was outstanding, Carlisle said. "He did a tremendous job in keeping the project moving on schedule, and working closely with our department during the construction process to help best tailor the school to our local needs. I would work with Hans anytime," Carlisle said.

The kids are indeed excited.

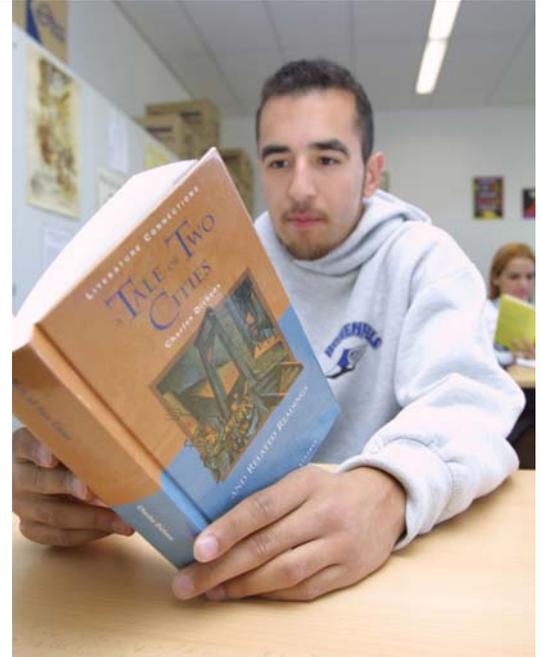
"The first day of school we all came in with the attitude of 'OK it's a new school,' and nobody really liked it until we got to see inside," Jonathan Garcia, a senior, said.



Teacher Elizabeth Pears (left) works with Chyne Morris to answer a question during class. The two are among more than 300 educators and students enjoying the new facilities.

"We've been waiting for this school for over two years now. Once we finally saw how good the facility was, we didn't believe it."

"Here we have more space and more opportunity to do things," Esteya Chirunga, a junior, said. "We finally have our own gym. Before we had to walk to the



Jonathan Garcia has already been enjoying the fruits of his new school. Here he reads the Charles Dickens classic "Tale of Two Cities."

post gym to play there. We have locker rooms. We have a great hall where we can all be in the same room. We don't need to take turns having assemblies. Everybody has breathing room."

"It seemed to me that everybody had a fresh attitude from last year ... because we have a new school now," Chirunga said. "We have more pride in Hohenfels than what we had last year."

Carlisle said he can see the new attitude in the students. "In the first couple of weeks of school, we've noticed that there's been no graffiti, very little trash and the kids seem to have sort of a different sense about what it means to be going to school. They feel good. My

discipline problems seem to be less ... and I think that's because they feel comfortable in this environment.

"Now they're saying, 'wow, look where we get to go to school.' It's an overnight change. This is one of, if not the best, schools in the world."