

Justice Center opens with red ribbon, grand tours

Jessica Kokesh Posted: December 7, 2011 1:00 pm [UPDATED](#)

KEARNEY — Buffalo County residents and government staff celebrated the opening of the Justice Center Tuesday afternoon.

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More than 100 people crammed inside the Justice Center's lobby to watch the Freemasons of Nebraska dedicate the cornerstone, hear speeches from those involved in the seven-year-long Justice Center project and take tours of the new facility.

Buffalo County Board of Supervisors Chairman Dick Pierce of Miller thanked county staff for all the work it did on the project and the community for its support.

"I was having a discussion with one of my sons about a month ago, and he said, 'You know, Dad, it's not about who done it, but who you done it for,' and I feel that we did it for you, the community, and for the safety of our sheriff's department and of our justice people, our judges and their staffs," he said.

The new Justice Center houses three full courtrooms, two hearing rooms, offices and work space for the district and county judges and their staffs, and five conference rooms. One conference room will be available for public use. This area also encompasses the administrative offices for the jail.

Court staff moved into the new facilities Nov. 9.

Nebraska Supreme Court Justice John Gerrard congratulated Buffalo County for having a courthouse that's on the cutting edge of technology.

All of the court rooms are outfitted with new equipment, including TV monitors, microphones at both the defense and prosecution tables, and an advanced sound system.

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Buffalo County District Court Judge John Icenogle said designing the courthouse to be tech friendly will benefit future generations.

“The new facility you’re going to get to see has state-of-the-art technical advances, most of which I believe have been placed in the courtroom for the benefit of the next generation of judges and lawyers because this generation is having a hard time catching up,” he said.

Icenogle said the updates to the Justice Center wouldn’t have happened without the taxpayers, who voted to approve a \$24.5 million bond to finance the project in 2008.

Gary Lambert of Kearney, who attended the ceremony, said he voted in support of the bond and that the county did a good job with the new courthouse.

“I’m very impressed with the whole aspect of it,” he said. “The courthouse is nice, and the facilities are very impressive.”

Although the red ribbon was cut on this section of Justice Center, work on the project is not complete quite yet.

The next phase of the project will include remodeling the original district court area to create space for the county treasurer and county attorney offices.

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