THE JOPLIN GLOBE

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# Cornell Complex celebrates completion of solar project

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Sharon Beshore, president of the Harry M. Cornell Arts & Entertainment Complex, called the solar energy project recently completed at the center "an investment to secure our future."

The Cornell Complex marked the project's completion with a ribbon-cutting at 1:30 p.m. Thursday.

Beshore and others welcomed to the complex former Missouri state Rep. Dirk Deaton, who served as Budget Committee chair before his August resignation, and guests including installers from Sun Solar, Liberty representatives and representatives of the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce to celebrate the installation of the 83-kilowatt solar energy system that began in January.

Deaton was recognized for his help in securing state funding for the project. Funding from an appropriation from the state of Missouri and a $250,000 grant from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources helped to pay for the project.

Deaton called the Cornell Complex a crown jewel for Joplin that is important to the community and said that the project was just the latest chapter in a bright future for the complex and the community.

Beshore noted that, while the solar installation advances environmental stewardship by reducing direct emissions, the board of the complex along with Connect2Culture and the George A. Spiva Center for the Arts have a stewardship responsibility to preserve and the Cornell Complex for the future. She said she recognizes the environmental benefits but that the money saved through reduced utility costs makes more resources available for artistic programming, education, exhibitions, performances and community engagement. She said both organizations are already seeing the benefits of the investment in the project.

Emily Frankoski, executive director of C2C, and Heather Lesmeister, executive director of the Spiva Center

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Courtesy photo

**An array of solar panels** has been installed on the roof of the Harry M. Cornell Arts & Entertainment Complex.



Photos by John Hacker | Globe

**Eastmorland Elementary School students** wearing hard hats witnessed the groundbreaking Thursday for a renovation project beginning at their school.

# Getting started again



**Students at Stapleton Elementary School** donned hard hats to witness the groundbreaking on Thursday morning for a school upgrade.

## Groundbreakings start Phase 2 of Joplin School improvements

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Groundbreaking ceremonies at Stapleton and Eastmorland elementary schools Thursday marked the beginning of Phase 2 of a Joplin Schools' districtwide facilities improvement plan.

That plan was developed by a committee of Joplin residents and school officials and funded by a bond issue passed by voters in April 2026.

District leaders gathered with engineers, architects and the children at both schools on the projects meant to bring Joplin's older elementary schools up to the standards used for schools built since the 2011 Joplin tornado.

Stapleton mom Jessica Altona, whose son, Tarik Altona, 5, is a special education student, said she thinks

See **PHASE 2** on A2




Courtesy | Joplin High School

**An architect's rendering** shows the proposed Talon Center to be built at Joplin High School.

## Joplin Talon Center to go out for bids next week

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The Talon Center will go out for bids next week and Joplin Schools officials hope to bring those bid results back to the Joplin Board of Education in December.

The Talon Center will be a 90,000-square-foot multipurpose building to be built on the south end of Joplin High School between now and the fall of 2028.

"It won't be attached to the school but it'll be there on the south end," said Dave Pettit, director of facilities for Joplin Schools. "It's going to serve during the day as classrooms, physical education, weight room — all those things that we have need of as an extension to Joplin High School. And then during the evening and on weekends it will be used as a practice facility for any of the sports and extracurricular activities, or meeting facilities for the school district as well as the community."

Joplin Superintendent Kerry Sachetta said the Talon Center will include a 90-yard artificial turf football practice field that can be used by many other teams and activities, classroom space for

See **BIDS** on A2

## Gene Watson to bring 14 Carat Mind tour to Coleman Theatre

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A tried-and-true traditional country singer, a man known as "the singers' singer," will visit Northeast Oklahoma next week.

Gene Watson will appear as part of the 14 Carat Mind Tour at 7 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 12, at the Coleman Theatre in Miami.

Watson, whose musical history spans six decades, will perform alongside his Farewell Party Band, bringing a mix of hits and new songs.

"I've been a singer all my life," Watson said. "I think I'm working harder on each album to perfect what I do, and still always working to be better."

Watson got his start in 1962 when he released "If It's That Easy" on Sun Valley Records. He worked with independent labels until 1975 when he signed and released "Love In The Hot Afternoon" with Capitol Records.

Since then, he's recorded 34 studio albums for a variety of labels and had more than 72 charted songs — including 23 top 10 hits, and 11 No. 1 country and gospel hits. In March 2020, he was inducted into the Grand Old Opry.

Watson said each song he's recorded has a personal meaning.

"I always want the people listening to feel the emotion," Watson said. "I don't want anything so technically slick that we lose the emotion or the electricity of the moment."

"Each song has special meaning to me, or I wouldn't record it," he added.

See **WATSON** on A2



Photo courtesy Gene Watson

**Gene Watson** will perform at the Coleman Theatre in Miami, Okla., on Nov. 12.

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