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Partnership school gets off on the Wright foot

By Aracely Hernandez - Staff Writer

MALTA - When a "W" in the courtyard of the former Malta High School was unveiled on Thursday, the standing crowd of more than 300 people cheered.

The white, concrete "W" previously had been an "M," for the old Malta High School. The "M" was turned upside down to represent the new Wright Elementary School.



Scott Kubelka (right), principal of DeKalb's new Wright Elementary School, the former Malta High School, laughs with Paul Wright during Thursday's dedication ceremony. Wright's family donated the land that Malta High School was built on. Chronicle photo HOLLY LUNDH

Thursday was the grand-opening celebration for the school. The event included speakers, food and a scavenger hunt for children, which went along with a back-to-school rodeo roundup theme.

The DeKalb School District is partnering with Northern Illinois University to provide programming at the school - the first of its kind in the area.

Fourth-grade teacher Pam Bybee wore a bandana around her neck and waited for her students to walk into and explore the new classrooms.

Last year she taught at Jefferson Elementary School. She said she is excited about the partnership with NIU.

The university will provide additional learning activities in the areas of fine arts and technology, among others.

"If you are teaching a subject or lesson like the Titanic, they can help enhance it with fine art, like a drama," she said.

The school also will work with technology and literacy liaisons at the university.

Jessica Rammon, 19, is a junior in NIU's teaching program. She led parents and children through the scavenger hunt to help them get acquainted with the school.

She is one of 19 interns taking courses through NIU at Wright Elementary School and then applying what they've learned to the elementary school classrooms.

"This semester we're helping with literature and reading," she said. "Next semester is math and

science."

The goal of the partnership is to learn what the best teaching methods are and to share them throughout the district and eventually with other schools in the state, NIU President John Peters said.

Parents in Cortland, Malta and DeKalb had to elect to send their children to Wright.

"One thing I really like is that everyone who is here chose to be here," parent Dawn Baker said.

Her daughter Alexx Scheidicker will be a fourth-grader.

Parent Dawn Marx said she likes the association with the university and the all-day kindergarten program. Her children Jacob and Jessica will be in fourth grade and kindergarten.

"(Jessica) is definitely ready for school," Marx said.

An excited Jessica nodded.

"Eight more days," she said.

Students return to school on Tuesday. Kindergartners start on Sept. 10.

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