

Traverse City Record-Eagle
August 11, 2014

School's out but Norris Elementary bell will live on

Posted: Monday, August 11, 2014 2:22 pm

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TRAVERSE CITY -- Chuck Raney remembers when he was a boy and attended grade school in a one-room schoolhouse with students in eight grades all lumped together.

Students would sometimes get to ring the bell that signaled the beginning of classes, a treat Raney fondly recalls. Raney, Elmwood Township's buildings and grounds supervisor, was excited to learn the bell would be moved from its current location in front of the Norris Elementary School to the nearby township hall.

"I remember hanging onto the rope and ringing that bell," Raney said. "Isn't that amazing? Oh, my goodness, this is crazy, this is unreal."

Team Elmer's is expected to move the bell Tuesday at about 8 a.m.

"We've made the decision to move it so it won't fall in the ash heap of history, and it's something township residents can enjoy," said Elmwood Township Supervisor Jack Kelly.

Traverse City Area Public Schools officials sold the old Norris School property in June to Grand Traverse Recreation Art Center, LLC. The property is adjacent to the old Grand Traverse Overall Supply Company site which once housed a laundry. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency declared the area a Superfund site because dry cleaning chemicals polluted the area.

The timing also coincides with Elmwood Township's sesquicentennial celebrations.

The bell sits on a brick masonry structure that includes two time capsules planted in 1977 for the school's 100th anniversary. The capsules were intended to be opened after 50 years and will remain closed until that time, Kelly said.

Original Article: http://www.record-eagle.com/news/local_news/article_1abf011f-4ab0-5283-92cf-8ab31084d6f5.html