

Supporters Seek To Save Historic School

Phase I fundraising seeks \$50,000 for Olive Branch building that is on national list.

NEW CARLISLE — Times are tough and grants are scarce.

But William Berry said that if the Olive Branch School Preservation Society (OBSPS) hopes to persuade others to support a \$1.3 million project to renovate the historic building, “we have to show commitment.”

That will begin Sunday from 2 to 4 p.m. when an open house at the school kicks off the group’s Phase I \$50,000 fundraising campaign.

“We plan to use that money to remove asbestos, because that’s one of the first things we’re going to have to do,” said Berry.

Founded in 2007, the OBSPS in 2009 backed the successful effort to get the Craftsman style school on the National Register of Historic Places.

“To me, the greatest signifi-

cance of the building is its unique design,” said Berry. “I’ve not seen another like it,” he said.

Berry’s personal theory is that in 1908, Dayton architect Charles Insco Williams chose the octagonal shape because barns of the day were octagonal and the school served a rural community.

The OBSPS has sought grants through the American Recovery Act and from the Ohio Historical Preservation Society but found the well was dry.

“We think, in time, we’re going to have to approach these organizations (and foundations) again,” Berry said. “We can’t do this with donations alone.”

“But that doesn’t mean we can’t continue or mustn’t continue what we’re about,” he added, steps he says are important to show potential funders the local community’s

commitment to the project.

Berry said those who attend the open house will be walking around boxes and other things the Tecumseh Local Schools stores in the “little round school.”

Although inconvenient for the tour, he said, continued use of the space since 1972, when it last was used as an art classroom, is a big plus because it’s been maintained.

“Interior-wise, there’s been nothing taken out or destroyed.”

A thermometer in front of the school will show the progress of fundraising.

People unable to attend the open house are invited to visit www.olivebranchschool.org, a Web site that has plentiful information about the OBSPS and the school’s architect and history, and features pictures of the building through the years.



*The Phase I \$50,000 fundraising effort to restore the old Olive Branch School will kick off with an open house from 2-4 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 4, at the building listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Barbara J. Perenic/
Springfield News-Sun*