

# Chehalem Cultural Center

By Barbara Doyle

The Chehalem Cultural Center in Newberg connects the community to many different cultural activities and gives people opportunities to discover, learn, and create. The center is located in what was Central Elementary School. The school building, the second so named at this site, was erected in 1935 with a \$15,500 grant from the federal government's Public Works Administration, plus a local bond for \$35,000.

The school opened to first- through eighth-grade students on September 23, 1935. To meet Oregon's evolving requirements for a standard school, classrooms were added, space was reconfigured, and the main entrance was moved to ground level in 1958. The building was not kept in good repair, however, and was closed in June 1995.

In 1997, the Newberg School District sold the building to the Chehalem Park and Recreation District for one dollar with the stipulation that the building remain in the public domain. Beginning in 2002, Oregon's congressional delegation secured federal dollars to begin repairs.

The Austin families in the Newberg area and several philanthropic organizations contributed enough money to complete the education wing of the Cultural Center, which opened in March 2010. The wing contains an art gallery, exhibit space for large three-dimensional pieces, art and music classrooms, ceramic and fused glass labs with a kiln area, and conference rooms.

When completed, the Chehalem Cultural Center will contain sound and movement studios, a 200-seat theater, a ballroom that can accommodate 500, a full-service kitchen, a conference center, and an outdoor plaza. The surrounding property includes Rotary Centennial Park, which is the site for free summer concerts.

## Sources

Chehalem Cultural Center. [chehalemculturalcenter.org](http://chehalemculturalcenter.org).

Fuller, Tom and Christy Van Heukelem. *Images of America: Newberg*. Mount Pleasant, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2010.

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