

THURSDAY, MAY 12, 2011

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John O'Connor, volunteer association president



Photos by JAMES A. JONES JR./jaj

It's not working out of a rabbit hutch anymore. The Duette Volunteer Fire Department dedicates its new firehouse May 19.

Little hub, big heart

Duette prepares to dedicate new firehouse on 75-acre park State R

By JAMES A. JONES JR.

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DUETTE — Volunteer firefighters of Duette have performed noble life-saving work since 1982, even though their workspace has been ever so humble.

In their earliest years, their headquarters was a barn borrowed from a neighbor, and later a rabbit hutch on a former chief's property.

More recently, firefighters have worked out of an open-air pole barn, where they parked several of their vehicles under nothing more than the stars and the moon.

But that all ends May 19, when the department moves into a modern fire house at 35800 S.R. 62.

The new building is adjacent to a new 75-acre park complete with a 19-acre lake, soccer and softball fields, and picnic pavilion. It's all built on reclaimed phosphate land and paid for by mining com-

pany Mosaic.

Mosaic donated \$2.8 million to construct the 8,785-square-foot station and the park.

"I'm really proud of how far we have come and how generous Mosaic has been in assisting us," said volunteer association president John O'Connor.

O'Connor's association with the fire department goes back to 1984 when he moved to Duette.

The fire department started as a community-service project of the Mighty 4-H'ers of Duette who petitioned the Division of Forestry for a brush truck for Duette. The Duette fire badge still contains a cloverleaf to commemorate the club's importance in the department's founding.

"That was our first piece of apparatus. It was kept in John Keen's barn on Keentown Road behind the Duette School,"

DUETTE TO 8B



The Duette Volunteer Fire Department carries on the contributions of the Mighty 4-H'ers in a cloverleaf.



GALLERY ONLINE |

Find more photos of the new firehouse at Bradenton.com.