

A band uniform and other memorabilia from Galveston's Central High School are on display at the Old Central Cultural Center. The center is launching a campaign to raise \$150,000 to cover the cost of federal budget cuts that were the source of operating revenue for the center.

KEVIN M. COX/
The Daily News
file photo



The plan to save Old Central High

The Old Central Cultural Center is going to launch a campaign to raise at least \$150,000.

Details will be announced Tuesday, but the short version of this story is that a new approach is needed to sustain one of Galveston's irreplaceable historic treasures.

It's not overstating it to say that Old Central is the cradle of education for African-Americans in Texas. It was established in 1885 — the first black high school in Texas.

African-Americans suffered many wrongs during the era of Jim Crow, but one of the worst was the systematic denial of access to meaningful education.

However, decades before the Civil Rights Movement, African-Americans in Galveston had an opportunity to get a fine high school education. For a time, Central was the only place in Texas where that was available.

Some families that have been on the island for generations are here

Heber Taylor



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because their ancestors saw that opportunity for their children and moved. Old Central was a beacon.

Because of that tradition, the African-American experience in Galveston was somewhat different from the standards that prevailed in the South. Nicholas Clayton, Galveston's most famous architect, designed the new school in 1893. An annex of the public library was added to the campus in 1904. Old Central had a strong academic tradition until segregation finally ended in 1968.

In 1974, the Old Central Cultural Center was established to preserve that legacy.

The cultural center opened with a \$75,000 grant from the Moody Foundation. Without



At a glance

Details of the "Save Old Central Campaign" will be announced at 2 p.m. Tuesday at the Old Central Library, 1302 27th St. in Galveston.

Two board members are leading this drive: Pete Henley at 409-392-0317 and Douglas Matthews at 409-599-5520.

that gift, there would be no cultural center.

For more than 25 years, the center has had a major tenant, the Community Action Council, which paid \$2,000 a month rent. With federal budget cuts, that contract ended in October, and the cultural center must find another source of operating revenue to keep its doors open.

In March, Old Central's board agreed to establish a general membership program, with an annual fee of \$35. If 1,000 people decided to support the cultural center, that move alone would off-

set the loss of its major tenant.

Many other moves are planned. The board hopes to expand marketing in the Houston area and increase the rentals of Jack Johnson Park, which is on the campus. The board also plans to create a Donor Appreciation Board to honor gifts of at least \$1,000. The gifts can be made in honor or in memory of family members and friends.

Two board members are leading this drive: Pete Henley and Douglas Matthews.

The board deserves the community's help.

Old Central should be a focal point for African-American history — not just in Galveston but across Texas.

If you're interested in details, drop in on Tuesday's news conference.

If you're already convinced this is worth your support, contact one of the leaders of this drive. They could use your encouragement and help.