

Digital conversion a reality for Sun Theatre

Williamston movie house to reopen Friday

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WILLIAMSTON — The effort by donors from across mid-Michigan to save the Sun Theatre in Williamston has been Oscar-worthy.

Fundraising efforts to raise \$80,000 and convert the theater to a digital operation began in November 2012. Co-owner Lisa Robitaille said this week enough money, including \$1,000 each from the Williamston Rotary Club and the American Legion Post — has been raised to allow the single-screen theater to make the critical conversion to a digital projection system from 35mm film.

The Sun will close Monday through Thursday to install the equipment and will reopen Friday with "The Croods," Robitaille said.

"We've seen it happen before when people come together, but you really see it when it's yourself. The small-town



Dan and Lisa Robitaille, shown in December outside their classic movie theater, The Sun, say they have raised the funds to allow it to go digital. LSJ FILE PHOTO

unity is unbelievable," she said.

Hollywood began switching to a digital format this year and is expected to end its use of film at the end of the year, threatening to make small-town theaters a thing of the past.

Similar fundraising efforts are underway at the Sun Theatre in Grand Ledge and the Eaton Theatres in Charlotte.

Any excess donations will be used for other projects at the theater.

The 308-seat Sun Theatre in Williamston sell tickets for \$4 each and a bag of popcorn costs 25 cents.

Robitaille said the picture and sound quality created by the digital system is a remarkable improvement for moviegoers.

The new system will have 14 speakers — four behind the screen and 10 in the auditorium — compared to the lone speaker now in use.

And while it will be quicker and easier to get movies, Robitaille and theater staff must learn how to use the digital system.

"I hope the first few shows go smoothly," she added. "Once we do a few times, I'm sure it will be a piece of cake."