STHS construction zone to become learning center in April

By Kathryn Reed

South Tahoe High School's class of 2010 will graduate knowing what it's like to learn in a new building with state-of-the-art equipment.

The building in what was the parking lot at the front of the school will open the day after spring break in April.

South Tahoe High Principal Ivone Larson talks about the auto shop that will open in April. Photos/Kathryn Reed

At Tuesday's school board meeting the funds to buy equipment and furniture for the two-story building were approved.

SMC Construction of Reno broke ground on the project in May. Many of the guys working there this week live on the South Shore. That was one of the goals – put locals to work.

Called the career technical education building, it houses the auto shop on the lower level. A glass garage door lets natural light in. It’s spacious, clean and looks almost ready to overhaul several Toyotas at once.

Ten bays will allow students to work on vehicles – and not just ones powered by gasoline.

The lifts are still in boxes, having arrived last week. Overheard are air nozzles and other necessities for the trade.

Two members of the Lake Tahoe Education Foundation are getting a tour from LTUSD Facilities Director Steve Morales. They are surveying the area in anticipation of having the annual Excellence in Education celebration in the building in May.

Both levels have areas for recycling.

Upstairs is where graphic arts, architectural drawing and construction classes will be taught.

Windows are everywhere it seems. Views, once the construction mess is done, will be stunning for those who teach and learn here.

The other building now under way will be ready for the 2010-11 school year. Most of the portables in the back of the school have been removed, and those that haven’t will be this summer.

This two-story building that overlooks the football field is designed to address the overcrowding at the school that resulted in the use of portables long after their designated 15-year lifespan.

Classrooms for math will be housed here, as well as environmental science (including a green house), the dental program complete with chair and X-rays, The Company – where students can do web design, business finance and the like.

Walls can be removed to allow for a speaker to talk to more

than one class at a time or for teachers to collaborate.

Both buildings have areas for student displays in the hallways. Internal stairs and elevators are in both, thus eliminating the need to go into the snow.

Some teachers have needed to be trained to teach in the new facilities. One just went to a biodiesel course. Others have the required training, but aren't using it because the courses or facilities are not yet in place.

"We are hoping (these programs) will draw families from outside the area to this level of education," STHS Principal Ivone Larson said.

Bids are being sought on the theater modernization project and the digital arts building that will be erected in front of the auto shop. Construction is expected to start this spring.

Larson said monthly meetings are going on with staff at Lake Tahoe Community College to ensure what students will be able to do in digital arts will tie directly into the college's curriculum.

The high school also wants to integrate its programs on site. Larson used the example of a digital arts student designing a set that construction students would build for the theater department.

"We are setting it up by department a lot like you would see on a college campus," Larson said.

The inner workings

Four years later and still the white board with its blue writing is attached to a wall in a room that is affectionately called the Think Tank.

Written on it are the dreams of district staff and officials. It starts at kindergarten and has paths that could lead

students to Ivy League schools.

The buildings and then the programs associated with them are the result of the vision and tenacity of several people.

Blueprints line the other walls, showing which dreams are about to be realized.

With grants coming in on a regular basis, it’s possible a second white board of dreams will need to be created.

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