

Major donation aids Seacrest school's plan for new gym, science center

The anonymous donation is the largest in Seacrest Country Day School's history

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A rendering of the Seacrest County Day School future new gymnasium and science center.

NAPLES — Seacrest Country Day School soon will have a new gymnasium and science center to accommodate the growing high school student population.

The new two-story, 25,000-square-foot building will be made possible thanks to an anonymous donation of \$4 million -- the largest cash gift in the school's history.

"I'm so excited about it," said Helen Ruisi, Seacrest Country Day School chief financial officer. "I think it's a testament to what we are doing here in Seacrest."

The interest in the high school has really soared, with 145 students in high school, Ruisi said.

At the end of the year, Seacrest will have outgrown the space for the high school, which includes nine portable classrooms and a deck system with canopies known as "the village."

Construction of the new building is slated to begin this winter and be completed for the start of the 2009-10 academic year.

While the \$4 million donation doesn't cover the entire cost of the project, Seacrest's board of trustees has committed to securing the additional \$1 million needed for completion.

Currently, the building is going through permitting and county approval.

"The new gymnasium and science center will ensure that Seacrest will have the facilities commensurate with the outstanding student-centered education based on Seacrest's Whole Person Development that is taking place on our campus each day," Barry Hastings, chairman of the board, said in a prepared statement.

It will have 18,000 square feet of gymnasium on the first floor, including a regulation-size basketball court, a weight-training room and multipurpose studio, as well as space and equipment for the school's athletic programs.

The second floor will have four science laboratories, including physics, biology and chemistry labs. A fourth classroom will serve as a multipurpose room, Ruisi said.

The new building will be designed by the architectural firm of SchenkelShultz in consultation with experts from around the country and will be built by Kraft Construction Co.

During the past 10 years, the school, pre-kindergarten through grade 12, has constructed 50,000-square-feet of buildings as well as the 30-acre upper school campus thanks in large part to gifts from philanthropic-minded friends of the school.

School officials were grateful for the donations.

Especially, Ruisi added, because so many people are struggling with the current economy.

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