

RANCHO SANTA FE NEWS

See this week's newspaper ads.



Also see our sister publication
THE COAST NEWS

Ranch residents help homeless students

by Patty McCormac

2/25/2011

RANCHO SANTA FE — When the new, expanded Monarch School opens at its new site in 2012, two Rancho Santa Fe residents will have a huge part in its creation and the advancement of its mission to help homeless children.

Mark McLaren and Judy Roberts, the newest members of the board of directors, each have much to offer the school in downtown San Diego.

McLaren, with a background in real estate, helped locate the new, much larger campus and Roberts has many good ideas about how to raise awareness of Monarch throughout the county.

McLaren has been on the board for about a year and a half, but he and wife Kathy, an educator, have been annual donors for a number of years.

“Then one of the board members who I’ve known for decades came to me and said they were looking for a new building and location for the school,” he said.

The board member asked McLaren to join the board and the hunt for the new school site.

“Finding a campus downtown is difficult,” he said. It has to have access to trains and the trolley because that is the way they (the students) get there or they don’t get there.”

Time was of the essence because the school was quickly outgrowing its building with its 170 students.

The board enlisted the aid of John Casey of Cushman Wakefield and within weeks, a new site was found near the Metro Transit Center and a block away from buses. It has room for expansions and one of the selling points is it was owned by the city’s redevelopment agency. It is a 25-year-old warehouse, on 2.2 acres with 50,000 square feet. The existing facility is 10,000 square feet in size.

He said the city has “bent over backwards,” to help this happen.

The school for homeless children was founded in a storefront in 1988. It is supported by the county school system just like any other school, but there is a private, nonprofit organization called the Monarch School Project that works on behalf of the students’ overall well-being. This includes food, health and dental care, clothing and personal hygiene.

Roberts said she got involved because of a friend of hers she has golfed with for years, Julie Dillon. She went down to take a tour of the school and was hooked.

To Roberts, the mental images of children, whose alarm clocks are the sprinklers that go on automatically in a park, haunted her.

“To conjure up these images is frightening to an adult, can you imagine a 10-year-old?” she asks.

Roberts became the head of the outreach committee.

“I do enjoying coming up with creative ways to get (the name) Monarch out there,” she said.

She said she has an idea of putting together a presentation program for young people in fraternities and sororities.

“We can ask if they want to do internships, help or volunteer or throw their own little fundraiser at their sorority house,” she said.

Roberts, who was one of the first female pilots for UPS, also has a background in theater arts and speech, which she taught for a time. She would like to enhance Monarch’s after-school programs with some drama programs.

“They can take on a role and get their feelings out,” she said.

She also believes the children should have speech classes, because even if they are “the smartest kid on the block,” if they don’t speak well, they won’t be heard.

Both Roberts and McLaren support several other charities.

Now that the new site has been found, construction is just around the corner.

“We hope to break ground this summer,” he said. But the opening of the school will not take place until 2012.

He said the total project will cost about \$14 million. They have \$4.5 million from a previous capital campaign, \$2 million from the sale of their existing facility and a few other resources all amounting to about \$7 million.

“A new capital campaign to raise the difference will be under way this month,” Roberts said.

To learn more, call Lauren White at (619) 685-8242.

Read more: [Coast News Group - Ranch residents help homeless students](#)