

Student union designed to tie STHS campus together

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is getting a conference center after all.

While it's on the campus of South Tahoe High School, it is a joint-use facility that is partly funded with a grant South Lake Tahoe helped secure.

It's like a mini-convention center – especially with all the high-tech features being built in. Drop down screens, smart boards, blackout privacy curtains, and Wi-Fi are included, plus dividers to make it one, two or three rooms. Maximum capacity will be about 150 people seated.



Workers are on schedule to complete the STHS student union by next school year.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

With meeting rooms named Cascade, Angora and Fallen Leaf, it will be hard for people to not remember they are on the South Shore.

Natural light will flood the rooms as windows more than 30-feet high flank the south wall.

For now, while work by employees of SMC Contractors and their subs continues inside under shrink wrap, the views are only of the interior work that needs to be finished. When it's done, the outside view will be of the courtyard area in the center of campus.

The white covering will come off in a couple months, but still, scaffolding will remain as work wraps up. The doors will open for the 2012-13 school year.

Principal Ivone Larson envisions the building, along with the other offerings the school can provide, to be attractive to outside organizations. Of course there will be a rental fee, though the city may use the meeting space for free.

With renovation of the gym complete, another source of income could be tournaments, with the idea cash would flow into town via hotel rooms and restaurants being full.

The building under construction has real plumbing – which means flush toilets. Those will be accessible to teams using the tennis courts and softball field. Athletes will no longer be relegated to using porta-potties.

A door will limit people just to the restrooms so they can't meander through the whole building when they aren't supposed to be in it.

This is the fourth new building at South Tahoe High School – all from the \$64.5 million Measure G bond that was approved by voters in 2008. Matching funds have increased the total amount closer to \$100 million – all for facilities that will be built throughout Lake Tahoe Unified, with the bulk being at the high school.

The gym and boiler room have been overhauled as well. The

sports medicine building should break ground this summer. It will be situated behind the Gold Gym and to the right of the student union.

"We're calling it a student union because it has the feel of a college," Larson said while giving a tour of the building Wednesday.

Student clubs are expected to use the rooms regularly. Cheerleaders are excited about the high ceilings so they can do all of their jumps.

Besides the rooms, the biggest area will be for eating. This building will literally unify the student body. Finally, everyone will be able to eat indoors at the same time in one place.

For now, there is no talk of making STHS a closed campus – just to freshmen, as is the rule today.

Larson believes with the number of students receiving a free or reduced lunch growing (it's about 50 percent at STHS) that more people will keep staying on campus.

Shelley Giannotta, food services director, hopes they'll be staying because of the expanded food choices she anticipates being able to deliver.

For those who want to be connected even during the lunch break, that will be possible. Much like airports, power outlets are being built in so people can multitask. With students using netbooks for much of their school work, not to mention needing batteries charged for other devices, plugs will be built into some of the pillars where bar height tables and chairs will go in.

Specifics on the furniture are still being worked out. Steve Morales, who is in charge of district facilities, expects the school board to have a furniture bid to review at a meeting in

May.

At the March 27 board meeting, it was unanimously agreed to go forward with the final Measure G bond sales of \$16.7 million to allow construction to meet the time lines that are in place. Also at the meeting, the board signed off on the completion of the gym renovation.

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Here is a video from a group of educators who were in town from Sacramento last week to see what all is going on in LTUSD.

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