

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mark Keppel's long road to construction celebrates completion in year's close

A special night for Mark Keppel saw two ribbon cutting ceremonies, two basketball games, and a huge showing of support from district and elected officials from throughout the area. After a process put into motion six years when Measure C was passed by voters in the November 2004 election, granting \$85 million for construction on Alhambra Unified School District high school campuses, Mark Keppel is now complete.

Mark Keppel has watched its campus shift dramatically in the last few years. Classrooms were modernized and refurbished, a new parking lot and new lunch shelters were constructed, the auditorium and library were renovated, and portable classrooms were removed. Even more spectacular, a brand new gym and two classroom buildings were built, bridging the gap from the school's proud past to today's modern architecture and technologically driven times.

While the science and social science classroom building opened its doors last spring, the music and world language classroom building was introduced officially to the community with the first ribbon cutting of the evening on Wednesday, December 15. Principal Grace Love addressed Mark Keppel students, parents, alumni, and other community members before she joined the district and elected officials in cutting the ribbon. Dignitaries included Superintendent Donna Perez, Board President Adele Andrade-Stadler, Board Clerk Chester Chau, Board Member Robert L. Gin, Thomas Wong representing 49th District Assemblymember Mike Eng, Alhambra Councilmember Barbara Messina, Alhambra Mayor Gary Yamauchi, and Monterey Park Mayor Betty Tom Chu.

"I'm the very fortunate principal of this wonderful high school, and I want to welcome you all to the new home for our music and world language departments," she said.

Superintendent Perez also addressed the crowd and called the building, "a wonderful gift," and that the day was a "dream come true." She thanked the voters who passed Measure C as well as the Board of Education.

The new structure, known as the "C Building," is three stories high and for the first time gives Mark Keppel the opportunity to house all of its world language classes in one building, giving the students and faculty alike a unified feel. Each of the 10 new classrooms, which take up the second and third floors, are 960 square feet and are designed to have minimal to no noise pollution from the surrounding 10 freeway. And already popular among Keppelers is the view of the San Gabriel Mountains which the classroom windows offer. On the bottom story, the choir and band room offer students rehearsal space and state of the art acoustics.

When it came to the gym, many speakers took to the stage while the cheer and dance teams celebrated the occasion. One very special guest in attendance was Doc Foster, who was the second student in the doors of Mark Keppel when the school first opened and the Aztec team doctor for Mark Keppel since 1966. Though without the red, felt hat he is often seen wearing at the sidelines of the football games, he nevertheless was on hand to share his pleasure in seeing his beloved alma mater continue to grow and reach a new phase in its history.

Principal Love touched on this theme as she addressed the parents of Mark Keppel students.

"A hallmark of Mark Keppel is parent involvement, and we have many parent organizations on campus including the Mark Keppel Alliance and the PTSA who have joined in this adventurous journey with us. Parents in your involvement, you've shared with us the dust, the broken pipes, the discoveries, and the joys of building on this campus that many students and staff will be enjoying for years to come. We could not have done it without you," she said.

After a ribbon cutting ceremony outside the new gym, all attendees were guided in to take their seats in the bleachers as the girls varsity team prepared to take on Temple City High School. Afterwards, the boys varsity took to the court against Franklin High School, whom they beat by a commanding score of 58-25 to treat the home crowd.

Mark Keppel Athletic Director, Mark Garcia, shared his thoughts on the new gym.

"The gym looks beautiful and we're all extremely pleased with it. It's a building that's going to be used for many functions. Basketball and volleyball games, badminton and wrestling matches, but also P.E. classes, rallies, and dances. It's something that benefits everyone and we couldn't be happier with how it's turned out," he said.

The gym seats 1300 people and is 12,000 square feet in size. The structure as a whole, which includes a new girls locker room and two offices, is 16,000 square feet. It has a full PA system, new scoreboards, and six basketball backboards.

The construction projects were contracted by BRJ and Associates, and built by McCarthy Construction. Architect Mun Leu designed the buildings, and was able to watch an entire school and community embrace the work that he was a part of along with district Chief Operating Officer Cynthia Martin and Construction Director Keith Matsuo.

"As an architect it's very rewarding to see that the clients are happy with the finished product, and as a community I'm very glad to share this with Mark Keppel. It's been a long process but it's fulfilling to see everyone is happy with the results," Mr. Leu said.

Only days before winter break began, Mark Keppel was able to celebrate the long road of building it endured over the years. 2011 is not just a new year, but the first complete year of Mark Keppel's modern campus.

