



NEWS

GOING GREEN, GOING GLOBAL
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By Jaime Richardson, Sahuarita Sun

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Sahuarita Christian Academy plans major expansion

Sahuarita Christian Academy is going green and going global, says Executive Director David Lyon.

The academy, at 2285 E. Sahuarita Road, is set to begin construction next month on its 34,000-square-foot, two-story "green" school building.

The private K-12 academy, known for its rigorous curriculum, opened its doors in the fall of 2007 with 27 students, led by a staff of eight in the school's modest modular building that houses classrooms and offices.

Currently, enrollment is at 170, and Lyon is estimating a jump to 250 by the start of the school year.

The staff, which has already grown considerably since August, will be tripling in size.

The plan was always to expand, Lyon says, and the more research he did into constructing a building that was environmentally friendly, the more he realized it was the right choice for the academy.

"Building green is the way of the future," he said. "These kids are our future. We want them to be safe, while at the same time familiar and comfortable with the latest technologies."

Nearly every aspect of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-certified building will be green, from a geo-thermal air-conditioning system to toxin-free paint and flooring.

Specially designed inset windows will prevent direct sunlight from heating up the classrooms.

A rain-capturing system on the roof will irrigate the school's desert landscaping and teach kids about sustainability, says Lyon.

Insulated Concrete Form or "Green Block" construction means the walls will consist of large Styrofoam blocks that "fit together like Legos" and are fortified with rebar before being pumped full of cement.

The sound-proof, lumber-free Green Block buildings have an estimated 400-year lifespan, he says.

But the growth of Sahuarita Christian Academy won't stop with its state-of-the-art building.

The academy has formed a global Christian school network and in the next few years will be opening satellite schools in Mexico, Romania, Uganda and possibly the Navajo reservation in New Mexico.

These schools will teach the same curriculum as the academy, but will be focused on helping less-fortunate children.

Lyon says the idea was sparked when friends in these locations expressed interest in opening schools that were both Christ-centered and academically challenging.

The school in Sonora, Mexico, which is associated with an orphanage, may be opening in the fall, and Romania is set for sometime in 2009, he says.

Once the new Sahuarita school is complete and plans for the global school network are under way, the focus will be institutes



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David Lyons of Sahuarita Christian Academy looks over plans for the new school.

of higher learning, says Lyon.

The Sahuarita community development corporation Nueva Esperanza was formed in 2006 on the basis of developing a master-planned campus with several institutes of higher learning, Lyon said. Those include a Bible college and a "green" vocational school that will teach technologies in energy savings and environmental design.

"It's always been on our agenda to grow Sahuarita Christian Academy into an institute of higher learning."

But for now, students are just looking forward to the exciting year ahead of them.

The companies contracting with Sahuarita Christian Academy — which include several international companies and Tucson-based Sun Mechanical — want to construct the building in less than 60 days, which would have the school open in time for the start of the semester.

The first 6 feet of the 34-foot-high structure will be built entirely by students at the July groundbreaking, says Lyon.

"Even the kindergartners can help lift the Styrofoam blocks," he said.

The school will cost an estimated \$5 million to build, though concessions from the companies whittle the school's portion down to \$1 million, says Lyon.

As a private, non-profit organization without ties to a church base, they are asking for the public's help in funding the construction.

Lyon is looking for sponsors willing to "purchase" one square foot of the 34,000-square-foot building for \$35.

The names of the sponsors will go on a wall at the front of the new building, under the verse: "With God, all things are possible."

"We want this to be a learning experience for the children," said Lyon. "We want them to see that truly anything is possible with God."

K-12 scholarships are still available until the June 30 deadline.

For more information about the school, phone (520)-481-6905 or visit online at www.sahuarita-sca.org.

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