

Superdome breaks ground to delight of crowd

It will be the first of its kind in the country. And it will be right here in Claremont.

Hundreds of supporters came out on Earth Day to witness the groundbreaking ceremony for Uncommon Good's new superdome building, called Greenspace.

The innovative structure, built mainly from soil dug from the ground where it will be built, will serve as Uncommon Good's new office and an educational center for the community. The event was held at the United Methodist Church, which provided the land to build the structure.

Uncommon Good board members and Executive Director Nancy Minte spoke during the ceremony to celebrate the new building.

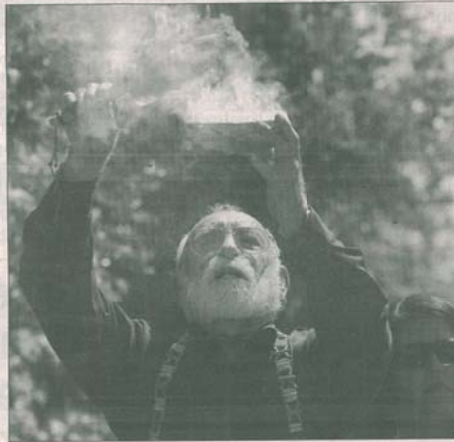
"We're not just building a building. We're not just building a social service center. We're not just building an environmental center," Ms. Minte said. "We are building the kingdom of God."

The land and structure was also given a blessing by Reverend Sharon Rhodes Wickert, pastor of the Methodist Church, and a traditional Native American blessing by representatives of the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians Tribal Council. The building will be constructed on a site once occupied by the Tongva tribe thousands of years ago.

The special guest speaker was Dr. John Cobb, a theologian, professor and author of *For the Common Good*, a critique of modern economic theories that argues industrial nations ignore the damage done to the biosphere by the profligate use of energy and scarce resources.

The idea for the superdome first came about in 2006 as Uncommon Good started looking for a larger office space. They currently work out of an office at Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church.

A student volunteer suggested a dome structure like the one developed by Iranian architect Nader Khalili. A former Claremont resident, Mr. Khalili founded the



COURIER photos/Steven Felschundnef
Tribal elder Mark Acuna performs a traditional Native American blessing on Saturday during the Greenspace Ground Breaking Ceremony at the Claremont United Methodist Church. Mr. Acuna is a member of the Tongva San Gabriel Band of the Mission Indians who lived for centuries near the site of the new building.

California Institute of Earth Art and Architecture. He died in 2008.

The following year, Uncommon Good approached the city about building the structure at city-owned Cahuilla Park but the city council was not supportive of the idea.

Ms. Minte also pitched the idea to the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden and The Claremont Colleges to use their land but discussions did not move forward. They considered some private property sites but the cost of purchasing the land was too expensive.

"I'm glad nothing clicked before," Ms. Minte said. "This is absolutely the best possible way to do this project. Our organization is perfectly aligned with the

mission and vision of the Methodist Church so we're happy to have this partnership. We both strongly believe in caring for creation and sharing the earth's resources with the poor."

Uncommon Good secured a grant through the Reformulated Gasoline Settlement Fund, a \$48 million pot to be used for projects promoting clean air for Californians. The grant resulted from a class action claims against Unocal.

"Over 100 grants were submitted, but only 10 were funded," Ms. Minte said. "Luckily, ours was one of the 10."

According to Jeffrey Veenema, a project manager from Claremont Environmental Design Group, the superdome will have 2500 square feet of interior space, 7 rooms and natural elements for heating and cooling.

About 90 percent of the construction material for the building will be taken from the ground where the superdome is to be built. The soil is placed in long, tube-like sandbags that are stacked in a coil formation to give the building its dome shape. The soil is mixed with either cement or lime and the sandbags are reinforced with barbed wire.

The dome will have a solar chimney, an underground ventilation system to bring in cool air, photovoltaic panels and a green roof for further insulation. Part of the structure will be built on land owned by the Claremont

School of Theology where bioswales will be built to gather rainwater.

Construction should be completed within a year. The extended timeframe will allow students from The Claremont Colleges to scientifically measure the carbon footprint of the construction process.

Once completed, the building will house Uncommon Good's social, environmental and educational programs.

—Tony Krick



Tribal elder Mark Acuna makes a short speech before digging a symbolic hole on Saturday during the Greenspace Ground Breaking Ceremony at the Claremont United Methodist Church.



Keynote speaker John B. Cobb smiles as he is introduced on Saturday during the Greenspace Ground Breaking Ceremony at the Claremont United Methodist Church. Mr. Cobb is an environmental activist as well as professor emeritus from Claremont Graduate University and The Claremont School of Theology.



Pomona College sophomore Adam Long looks through a stack of humorous slogans about plastic bags while working the Blue Avocado booth on Saturday during the Claremont Earth Day Celebration. The company uses the giant ball covered with plastic bags, seen at right, to help promote the use of its reusable bags.



Claremont resident Thomas Bleakney gives a tour of the new Nissan Leaf on Saturday during the Claremont Earth Day Celebration. Mr. Bleakney has ordered a Leaf from Nissan but his vehicle has yet to be delivered.

Celebrating Mother Earth



COURIER photos/Steven Felschundneff

Ezra Reyes, left, Alex Boshara and Shannon Caras learn about recycling with the help of teenagers Shelley Lau and Eric Zhou on Saturday during the Claremont Earth Day Celebration. The children's educational activity was offered by the United Nations Association USA, Pomona Valley Chapter.



COURIER photos/Steven Felschundneff

A large crowd gathered on Saturday as the first shovels of earth were excavated during the Greenspace Ground Breaking Ceremony at the Claremont United Methodist Church. Organizers held the event on Earth Day to highlight the structure's low energy use and use of building materials found at the construction site.



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readers' comments

The good of it all

Dear Editor:

Ten years ago we chose to leave New Mexico to live at Pilgrim Place because it was a spiritually focused, serving intentional community. We knew it was situated in a beautiful, intellectually stimulating small city. However, we did not anticipate that both were becoming exciting "cutting edge" sites for America and beyond. (Much less that Claremont's newspaper would eventually be awarded a #1 publication status in this very vital American state.)

Well, this last Saturday we experienced a sort of Joycean epiphany at the ground breaking ceremony sponsored by Uncommon Good for its new home.

For the first time in North America not only was a new organizational headquarters being erected in a modest manner with a practical and pioneering vision, but most strikingly, the very composition of the forthcoming new structure, and the programs it will nurture, would dramatically demonstrate the interrelatedness of caring for our poor and our planet.

The whole inaugural glimpse of what can happen offered us a needed boost in creative hope, and a genuine sense that we collectively can indeed redeem our crisis ridden civilization.

In the inaugural presentations, local Native American recognition, and its long wisdom, was gently brought front and center. Then followed the prophetic words and analytic sagacity of Dr. John Cobb. The simple blessing offered by host Pastor Sharon Wicketts, before the actual groundbreaking, well represented the quiet, unanimous and gift of her United Methodist Church congregation.

Simply by being present we came to a

deeper awareness of Uncommon Good's historic, pioneering achievements. And, in the joyful and energizing moments together, once again astonished by the amazing vision and courage of Uncommon Good's Founder and Director: Nancy Mintie. A very uncommon lady.

How good it is to be a citizen, younger or older, of Claremont, California.

Jim and Joann Lamb
 Claremont

Celebrate student achievement

Dear Editor:

CUSD School Board Member Steven Llanusa makes a good case in favor of extending the certificate of completion to those high school students who have completed all of their course requirements, even if they fail the California Exit Exam. I also agree with him that we need to find a way to allow these students to participate in the graduation ceremonies as long as they have met the standards that their individual teachers have set for them.

I'm a high school teacher in Montclair and many of my students have difficulty, for many different reasons, passing the California Exit Exam. (Consider Mr. Llanusa's comments that even though the math section is based on middle school math, it doesn't necessarily mean that the questions are 'everyday math'.)

Many adults would struggle to pass questions about factoring, scientific notation, etc., without a bit of coaching.) However, some of these students who continue to fail this test, even with specialized coaching and repeated tries, are my best artists, or they are the ones who choreograph our rallies, or they man our phones at the front desk of our school.

One remarkable student was hired by our assistant principal to run lights and sound at school events because he was the best qualified for the job. Everyone has something to offer.

In the 1970s, I was an exchange student at Colby College in Maine for a semester. A student in my dorm was severely dyslexic and, though he was a math whiz, he could not read, but he was still an asset at this private, elite college.

Many evenings, a group of us would pile into his room where he would sit in his rocking chair (I'm not kidding!) while he, born and raised in Maine, would tell us stories—slightly older than us, we felt like little kids all over again and, it was because of his differences that he made such an impact on us.

Public schools have a mission to be as inclusive as possible—celebrating achievement in any direction should be encouraged.

Pamela Nagler
 Claremont

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READERS' COMMENTS

The COURIER welcomes all readers' comments on any issue or concern. Letters may be submitted by email to editor@claremont-courier.com, by fax 621-4072, by mail 1420 N. Claremont Blvd., Ste. 205B, Claremont, CA 91711, or hand-delivery. Email is the preferred method.

Deadline for submissions in the Wednesday issue is Monday at 3 p.m.; the deadline for the Saturday issue is Thursday at 3 p.m.

The COURIER cannot guarantee publication of every letter. We reserve the right to edit letters for space. Letters should not exceed 250 words.

weather report

ALTERNATING WEATHER PATTERNS CONTINUE

It will be a warm week with high pressure in place through Friday. Mostly light winds. High on Wednesday, mid 90s. Slightly cooler by Friday. High Thursday, low 90s Friday upper 80s. Overnight lows ranging in the 50s.

—Gary London
 local weather observer

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