



— Courtesy Artist's Rendering of Brook Hill School's Planned Humanities Building

Brook Hill's Big Plans

Christian School Announces Plans For Four New Buildings

By **BETTY WATERS**
Staff Writer

BULLARD — The Brook Hill School, a non-denominational Christian day school that offers boarding, celebrated its 10th anniversary Thursday and looked toward the future by kicking off the public phase of its first capital campaign to raise \$13 million for a major campus expansion.

The private, co-educational, college preparatory school has grown from 31 students in sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grades its first year in fall 1997 to 507 currently in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. The school has graduated 136 students who received approximately \$5 million in scholarships.

Campus facilities have also grown. Brook Hill opened with two facilities, Ornelas Hall and Herrington Sports Center, and then, throughout the years, added Lauderdale Hall, two boarding houses, a lower school, football stadium, baseball field and other facilities to its 180-acre campus.

"This is just the beginning," Headmaster Rod Fletcher told a crowd of families, alumni, teachers, students and community leaders.

On Thursday, officials announced a \$13 million goal for a "Realizing the Vision" capital campaign to fund construction of four more campus buildings — a lower school gymnasium,



— Staff Photo By Tom Turner

ON SITE: Guests and officials of the Brook Hill School break ground for four new buildings on Thursday in Bullard. The school is planning to raise \$13 million for the project.

an extra classroom wing for the lower school, an athletic center and a three-story humanities building.

"The construction of these four new buildings will allow us to meet the overwhelming demand from our community for a comprehensive, quality

Christ-centered college preparatory education, as well as move us forward with regard to the overall master plan for the school," Fletcher said.

Donors have already committed nearly \$8 million during the "quiet" phase of the campaign.

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See more plans for new buildings on the Brook Hill School campus on our Web site, www.tylerpaper.com.

The announcement highlighted celebration of Brook Hill's first decade. The program featured performances by the school's choir, orchestra and a three-member ensemble, plus a keynote speech by the Rev. John Bisagno, former pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston.

Work on the humanities building is under way. To be called Founders Hall — in honor of the school founder's, Stephen Dement — it will house a 90-seat lecture hall, 10 classrooms, lounge area, offices, conference room, student center, two-story library and Museum of American Freedom.

The museum will house Smithsonian-quality items, said Laurie Humphries, director of development. It has been Dement's dream; the collection is amazing and still growing, said Ginger Bell, director of admissions and marketing.

Museum exhibits will include a helicopter from the Vietnam War, a plane fuselage that flew over Normandy during World War II, an original uniform

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from every American battle fought since the Revolutionary War, a World War II-type jeep and something autographed by every U.S. president from George Washington to George Bush.

The library in Founder's Hall will be named in honor of Ginger Bell, director of marketing and admissions, who was instrumental in establishing the school.

The lower school gymnasium will serve as a place for lower school students not only to participate in physical education activities, but also where they can present performances and attend chapel services. It will double as a second practice floor for upper and middle school students after school. The facility will be named the Ann Kimrey Gymnasium in honor of the sister of philanthropist Louise Ornelas.

A second, 12-classroom wing for the lower school will accom-

modate "phenomenal growth," Ms. Humphries said. The lower school started in facilities of Bullard Southern Baptist Church, relocated in its own building on campus and has now outgrown it.

The humanities building, lower school gymnasium and lower school classroom wing are scheduled to be finished by August 2008, and the athletics center in May 2009.

The athletics center will be named in honor of Kyle Lake. He was part of a group of young men in a Sunday school class taught by the Brook Hill founder that prayed for creation of the school, then served as the school's first summer camp soccer coach. He became a preacher and was tragically killed when electrocuted while conducting a baptism service in Waco.

Additional capital campaigns will be conducted in the future to

finance more facilities shown on a map of current and planned campus facilities, including a fine arts building and tennis courts, officials said.

The board has set a goal of 938 students in 2012, with the majority being day students and 200-260 being boarding students.

"That would be a graduating class of 80 students. That's big enough to have a band and orchestra and football team, but small enough to still give individual attention to students. Our lower school will never have more than 18 students per class," Ms. Humphries said.

Brook Hill is organized into a lower school for pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, middle school for sixth through eighth grades and high school for ninth through 12th grades.

The student body is diverse, predominantly composed of day

students from within a 30-mile radius of the school — most from Tyler and Jacksonville, although some drive over from Palestine, Arp, Whitehouse, Lindale and Van.

The boarding component for eighth through 12th grades has 40 international/domestic students housed in two boarding houses, one for boys and one for girls.

Many of the boarders are international students from abroad sent to Brook Hill by parents who want their children to receive an American education. They come from Macedonia, Mainland China, Taiwan, Angola, Korea, Japan, Cameroon, Ghana, Mexico, Paraguay, the Bahamas and other places. However, a few boarding students are from Lindale, Henderson, Arlington, Dallas and Houston.

Although Brook Hill is a Christian school, students come to

the school with other faiths, such as Judaism, Hinduism, Shinduism and Buddhism.

The boarding houses have four suites upstairs for five students each with a private bath. Downstairs is a full kitchen, family room, library and three-bedroom apartment for "boarding parents" who live there with their own children and provide oversight to boarding students.

Besides classroom studies, Brook Hill provides numerous fine arts activities for students in choir, orchestra, visual arts and drama, while athletics programs

include football, softball, baseball, volleyball, tennis, track and soccer.

Governed by a 12-member board of trustees, the school is accredited through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. It is also affiliated with the Association of Christian Schools International, the College Board, National Association of Independent Schools, National and Texas Association of College Admission Counselors, the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools and the Association of Boarding Schools.