

Newport's Environmental Nature Center breaks ground for new preschool

By PRISCILLA VEGA FEB 16, 2018 | 4:15 PM



Newport Beach Mayor Marshall Duffield speaks during a groundbreaking ceremony Thursday for a three-classroom preschool at the Environmental Nature Center in Newport Beach. At left is Bo Glover, the nature center's executive director. (Kevin Chang / Staff Photographer)



City leaders and other community members celebrated the groundbreaking for the Environmental Nature Center's 8,000-square-foot, three-classroom preschool Thursday evening in Newport Beach.

The preschool will be built next to the nature center's redwoods. About 40 people attended the ceremony, including Newport Beach Mayor Marshall Duffield, Councilman Brad Avery and a representative of Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Costa Mesa).

"I thought this day would never come," said Bo Glover, executive director of the Environmental Nature Center. "The impact of our nature preschool on students, community and world will be more than any of us can ever imagine."



The preschool, which is expected to be completed in 2019, already has received interest from more than 500 people, Glover said.

More than 26,000 students from all over Orange County visited the nature center last year, according to Rick Wandrocke, president of its board of directors.

Wandrocke credited Glover for envisioning a learning space where the center could reach an age group it hasn't yet reached.

Glover introduced the preschool's director, Sue Bierlich, who will establish a curriculum and hire staff.

"Young children will be immersed in nature and learn about the nature world through experiences and adventures every day," Bierlich said.

Research has shown that optimal learning occurs through hands-on, sensory experiences in a nature-based environment where children's interest and inquires are encouraged and facilitated, Bierlich said.

For more information, email Lori Whalen, education and community relations director, at lori@encenter.org.



Environmental Nature Center board members and Newport Beach City Council members have their shovels ready for Thursday's groundbreaking ceremony for the center's new preschool. (Kevin Chang / Staff Photographer)



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