



ESCONDIDO ADVENTIST ACADEMY

Escondido, California



Building a new school building can be a complicated process, but for Escondido Adventist Academy in North San Diego County, things had a way of falling into place. Established in 1903 as an elementary school, the academy grew to a K-12 program in 1983.

More than 50 years ago, the school had settled on a site on the corner of 9th Avenue “in the middle of a field,” principal Kris Fuentes said. “Then two decades later they put in a freeway, so 9th Avenue, which was

pretty rural at the time, became a main thoroughfare. A Target moved in across the street and a shopping center grew up around it, and suddenly we became not a rural venue anymore. We felt it was time to move.”

Over the years, Escondido Adventist Academy looked at opportunities to move to different places, “but we were in a unique situation,” Fuentes explained. “We needed to stay on the I-15 and Highway 78 corridor. We pull students from any of those directions, and we needed to stay on that corridor.”

Unfortunately, there were not a lot of options for the school, but staying in their current campus was not an option either. Renovating the group of buildings constructed between the 50s and the 80s would cost millions and constrict the school’s ability to teach classes while construction was underway. It would also take valuable time to look for new property on which to build.

As the school mulled these challenges, a man walked in and offered to buy the school. He wanted the property where the old school sat so badly he even offered to find another place for the school to build.

The man’s search ultimately pointed the school toward an opportunity. The academy is operated by a school board that that is made up of representatives from 14 Seventh-day Adventist churches in San Diego North County. It is important not to show partiality to one church over another, but one piece of property presented to Fuentes by the man interested in purchasing the old school campus was owned by and

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Church: Escondido Adventist Academy

Location: Escondido, California

Grades Served: K-12

Size: 70,250 square feet

Cost: \$8,268,467

Purpose: To build a new school that shares a campus with a new church

Challenge: The work site; the school was built at the bottom of a hill.

Solution: The hill had to be cut back and shaped to accommodate the project. The hill was mainly rock and had to be blasted in order to be sloped. But once shaped, the site allowed for separate walk-in entrances for both the first and second floors of the school.

the future site of Escondido Seventh-day Adventist Church. In order for the school to build on that land, the church would have to be willing to share its campus, and – most importantly – the board would have to be in agreement.

The church owned the property free and clear and was raising funds to build a new church building. The school would get funding from the sale of its old property. Because the two entities – the academy and the church – would be on the same campus, the

design of both would have to mesh. The school and church hired a team from Building God's Way (BGW) Church Building & Church Design.

BGW presented the school with a basic plan for a rectangular-sized school building and made recommendations for what would be included in the space, including classrooms, a cafeteria, a library and bathrooms.

Fuentes laid the plan out on a large table and let faculty and staff play with the design. The 70,250-square-foot space included a

regulation high school gymnasium with a sports hardwood floor; a multi-purpose space that can be configured for dining, assemblies and community events; a second floor chapel; and appropriate classroom space that includes music, sciences and home economics.

"Some things I really liked about the design," Fuentes added. "Our kitchen can serve indoors or outdoors. The indoor auditorium can be used as a cafeteria or gym. They also designed a stage that sits between the gym and auditorium and opens to both rooms so I can have a gather of 250 in the auditorium for dinner theater or other small production, or I can open to the gym I can have graduation services for 600."

Though the design began as a somewhat basic plan, it had to be adapted to the property. The steeply sloped site allowed a first-floor entrance for K-8 students and a second-floor entrance for 9-12 students.

The exterior of the school and church were designed to match the local "San Diego look, that is prevalent in the area," said Mike Cagley, with Hilbers, Inc., the contractor that partnered with BGW on the project. The design included stucco and stone columns in muted shades with terra cotta accents.

The interior design was also made simple. The school got to choose from carpet and paint samples from a palate presented by BGW. The firm also provided resources for furniture, which helped keep costs down substantially.

"They also gave us the freedom to use local people that wanted to give to the school," she said, like cabinet makers who provided four kitchens for the home economics room. The school was just shy of being completed by graduation day in May 2008, but the city granted a special permit so graduation services could be held in the auditorium. It was a special day made even more special because it allowed family and friends to see how far construction had begun. By the start of the school year in August 2008, the school was complete. **CSP**

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