

[Click to Print](#)[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

[South Side center for those with special needs dedicated](#)

By [Jennifer R. Lloyd](#) - Express-News

Web Posted: 04/12/2010 12:00 CDT



Harriet and David Oppenheimer look over butterfly wall art that acknowledges major donors to the Oppenheimer Center. J. Michael Short/Special to the Express-News

Ranking among the newest developments on San Antonio's South Side is a recently completed expansion at the Mission Road Development Center for children and adults with special needs.

On Sunday, community leaders and residents of the campus dedicated the new Jesse H. and Susan R. Oppenheimer Center for Programming and Recreation that will be a daily haven for nearly 150 children and adults with developmental disabilities.

"There are a lot of great things happening on the South Side these days, a lot of new development — the new campus going up for Texas A&M San Antonio ... we have a beautiful Toyota plant and, of course, this facility,"

said state Sen. Carlos Uresti, who lives within three miles of the campus. "It's a new day for this part of the city in so many ways."

Susan Oppenheimer said she and her husband Jesse, who died last fall, provided the money to kick-start the fundraising campaign with a \$1 million challenge grant. Nearly 100 others donated more than \$3 million to build the 12,200-square-foot center, officials said. The center falls under the umbrella of the Mission Road Ministries.

San Antonio-based Marmon Mok Architecture designed the building to maximize natural light and take advantage of sustainable features such as a rainwater collection system.

"Everyone is sensitive to a light, uplifting environment, but especially these kids really respond positively to that," said Stephen Souter, managing partner of Marmon Mok.

On Sunday, Lora Butler, executive director of the center, led the 50 or so children who live at the South Side campus in releasing small butterflies as symbols of the site's transformation. Though some of the children served by the nonprofit have experienced neglect and abuse, all were smiling as they scooped the less energetic butterflies from the freshly sodded lawn around the center and lifted them into the air.

Joshua, a 15-year-old resident of the campus, was looking forward to playing in the new multi-purpose center that has seven classrooms, a basketball court and a kitchen that can be used to teach the residents life skills. Joshua said he will enjoy listening to music in a specially-equipped sensory room.

"It's beautiful," he said of the building.


For the first time, residents will be joined by children from the South Side community who also are in need of the nonprofit's services. This year, the center will offer a summer rehabilitation day-camp program for 10 area children, said Kate Edwards, development and public relations associate with Mission Road Ministries.

"The children who will benefit from the Oppenheimer Center will face challenges that most of us have never had to endure. They need protectors and they need champions," Uresti said.

"Developmentally disabled children will have a safe place to go after school here on the South Side."

Find this article at:

http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local_news/South_Side_center_for_those_with_special_needs_dedicated.html?showFullArticle=y

 **Click to Print**

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.