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TERI looks for general contractor for construction of new facility

By **CARLOS RICO**, The Daily Transcript

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Soon, construction will be present on a 20-acre lot in San Marcos as the Training Education and Research Institute (TERI) gears toward building a new campus.

TERI is a private nonprofit corporation, founded in 1980 by Cheryl Killmer, which helps children and adults with disabilities such as autism, cerebral palsy and epilepsy. They act like a college by providing educational settings and activities for 600 students a year.

Currently TERI is in the process of finding a general contractor to this new facility that is designed to have 10 buildings, which will occupy 2 acres of the site and grouped in a "U" shape around an open grass terrace.

Five of these structures will be educational centers and will house the TERI Learning Academy, a non-public school program for children who have autism, developmental disabilities and severe behavior disorders; the Country School, a private school for children who have learning disabilities or other mild to moderate disabilities that affect learning; First STEP Childcare Program, a licensed preschool that serves the children of TERI employees and also functions as an integration site for handicapped children and toddlers from the surrounding community; and the Center for Art and Adult Education, designed to serve 200 individuals over the age of 22 who need assistance and support in learning basic life skills, vocational skills and behavior management.

The new facility on the Twin Oaks Valley land will also have an Aquatic Therapy Center, Vocational Training Center, Administration/Research Center, Therapeutic Equestrian Program and an auditorium/gymnasium.

The rest of the 18 acres are planned to be open space for grass fields, trees and other natural landscape space in an early "California craftsman style" environment.

"We are in need of a new and bigger facility to operate," said Laura White, director of development. "Right now, we have no outdoor space, so we can't fully help our clients as much as we would like."

The project, which is slated to start construction in the second half of 2009, is estimated at \$30 million, according to White. Since they do not receive any public funding, TERI has held fundraisers to pay for some of this new facility.

One such fundrasier was the Dirce Schwartz Memorial Golf Tournament, which took place May 2, was named after the founder after she died in 2005. This will be the fourth year that proceeds from this event go to the construction of the new facility and the 19th time the golf tournament has been held.

Besides the golf tournaments, TERI holds other fundraisers and receives grants from private family foundations, and they do not get any public funding, according to White.

According to White, TERI expects a "conservative estimate" of \$600,000 to be brought in at this year's tournament, but she also mentioned that the tournament also bring public awareness and a chance to educate.

"One in 150 children are born with autism and this rate is growing," she stated.

One of the sponsors of the golf tournament is Dewhurst and Associates. Dewhurst, along with his brother, Dave, will co-chair this event.

"TERI is a wonderful organization and we are proud to be apart of what they do as they strive to build their new campus," said Doug Dewhurst, who decided to get involved once hearing about this organization.

Besides money from fundraisers, TERI has received funding from private donors. One of these contributors has been Charles R. Cono, local businessman, who first donated \$1 million to help buy the San Marcos property, which was purchased in 2004, and then another \$1 million. For this, the new center will be named after Cono.

The process of getting a new facility started five and a half years ago. According to White, TERI has raised about \$6 million so far and plans to raise more money by selling the naming rights to the center's buildings.

TERI's goal is to have a state-of-the-art facility. One that will be a model for the entire U.S. to follow, and one

that will use as much natural resources as possible to help these types of people.

"Our goal is to become an internationally recognized center of excellence and social change for education, life planning, health, fitness and research," White said.

TERI, which is currently based out of Oceanside, employees 300 people, of which 140 work full time. According to White, TERI doesn't plan to hire more staff when the new center opens. Instead, she mentioned that they will wait and see how much the new center will grow in terms of new clients and then see if more staff will be needed at that time.