

Neighborhoods

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Veda Morgan, editor
vmorgan@courier-journal.com
582-4167, phone, 582-7080, fax
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Christian Academy Southwest gets home

School moves classes into its own building

By Darhiana M. Mateo
dmateo@courier-journal.com
The Courier-Journal

Olivia Higdon, 13, had been waiting almost seven years to attend class in a real school building.

Last Wednesday, she got her wish.

That's when Christian Academy of Louisville Southwest opened on St. Andrews Church Road and welcomed 280 students in preschool through eighth grade.

The new campus — the fourth in the Christian Academy system — has been seven years in the making and has united students who previously attended classes at Shively Christian Church and Highland Park Christian Church.

"Since second grade, I've been waiting for this. It's great," Olivia said. "We have lockers now, switch classes more — we never had our own cafeteria before."

The 50,000-square-foot, two-story building also features a media center, computer lab, gymnasium, and music and science labs.

Several years ago, a group of families decided that a Christian Academy campus was needed in southwestern Jefferson County, principal Judy Funderburk said.

They found space at Shively Christian Church, and 26 students in kindergarten through second grade packed into the church's Sunday school classroom. The enrollment kept growing, and each year the campus added a grade. The school also expanded to Highland Park Christian Church.

The school offers strong academics in a Christ-centered environment, Funderburk said.

When businessman Donnie Jones donated 40 acres along St. Andrews Church Road almost five years ago, the dream of a building for the school began to take shape.

School officials broke ground on the building in June 2005.

"We celebrated when the big machines came," Funderburk said. "We celebrated when steel beams went up. We celebrated when bricks started going up."

But the project, which cost more than \$7 million, also demanded a lot of sweat, prayers and patience.

The school paid for the building through donations, and it sold bonds worth \$3.5 million.

"Finding the money was the most challenging part," said Stan Franczek, who serves on the board of directors for the Christian Academy school system and has two children at the English Station campus. "Now we have a school that's sort of the jewel of this part of town."

The campus is supported by tuition, which averages about \$4,150 a year for the first child, and donations from families and friends. Tuition is reduced for each additional child in the school system.

Joy Davis, a kindergarten teacher at the southwest campus, has two sons and a daughter enrolled there.



Photos by Michael Clevenger, The Courier-Journal

First-graders walked through their classroom last week in the new Christian Academy of Louisville Southwest. The school had been using space at Shively Christian Church and Highland Park Christian Church.



The building includes a media center, computer lab and gymnasium.



By Steve Durbin, The Courier-Journal



Jason Horn, left, and Gabe Vance, both 4, played in the kindergarten room at the school. Officials hope to eventually add a high school at the southwest campus.

She said she's thrilled to have her children together.

Davis thinks the new campus will have a positive impact on the community.

"People don't have to go to the East End to find high academic standards. They can have it now in their own community," she said.

Barry Saylor, who has three children at the southwest campus, agreed that it will enrich Pleasure

Ridge Park.

"Our kids go out into the community and have a big impact," he said. "To drive up and see the parking lot full of cars, full of kids, it was honestly very moving."

The completion of the building marked the first phase of the project. Funderburk said phase two — which entails adding a high school — will take shape in the coming years.

Next year, the school will offer

ninth grade.

Meanwhile, student Gregory Laughlin is enjoying the new building. He is grateful for the little things, like getting to switch rooms for different classes, and said he looks forward to playing basketball in the gym.

"The first day I came in I was like whoa — this is big," he said. "It's the first building we have that we own."

Reporter Darhiana M. Mateo can be reached at (502) 582-7086.

CHRISTIAN ACADEMY OF LOUISVILLE — SOUTHWEST CAMPUS

Address: 8307 St. Andrews Church Road

Contact person: Principal Judy Funderburk

Phone: (502) 447-6500

Grades: Preschool through eight

Expansion plans: Officials will add a ninth grade for its graduating students next year. Later, they plan to open a high school adjacent to the current building.

Web site: www.christianacademylou.org