



Wasco school in works

BY STEVEN MAYER,
Californian staff writer

When Gary Bray helps turn a shovelful of dirt this morning at a scheduled

groundbreaking for a new elementary school in Wasco, the act will be purely ceremonial.

That's because heavy equipment operators started breaking ground at the site several weeks ago.

The \$18 million school -- expected to open in fall 2007 -- will be named for Teresa Burke, a longtime Wasco educator and member of the pioneering Kern County Burke family. Burke, the aunt of the late auto dealer and community philanthropist Jim Burke, died in 1986. If \$18 million sounds high, it's because the cost of building new schools has more than doubled in recent years, said Bray, the superintendent of the Wasco Union Elementary School District. "We could have built it six years ago for \$8 million probably," Bray said. "That's how much the cost has gone up."

Located at the southwest corner of Griffith Avenue and Filburn Street in south Wasco, Teresa Burke Elementary School will house some 800 students in kindergarten through the sixth grade, Bray said. The school was designed by BFGC Architects Planners Inc. of Bakersfield. But like most school districts, Wasco Union saved money by reusing a successful design for another school in the district, rather than redesigning the new campus from the ground up.

"It's called rearming the plans," Bray said.

With a population of about 3,200 students, the elementary district in Wasco is growing. But that number is expected to increase by 4 percent to 6 percent per year for the foreseeable future, Bray said. Longtime Wasco resident Adel Durando, 80, said she's thrilled Burke is receiving this honor. Not only was Burke her eighth-grade teacher in Wasco, she later became Durando's teaching mentor when Durando entered the profession. "She was a mentor to everyone," Durando said. "She was an outstanding educator -- very compassionate. When she became a principal and administrator, she worked with new young teachers and brought us up to her standards. "She loved us all. She loved every single one of us."

Photos and captions by: Lundgren Management



Gary Bray – Superintendent of the Wasco Union Elementary School District



Eric Sorensen is on the far left of this photo and is next to Gary Bray. Brad Mayberry (Principal) is fourth from the left. Adel Durando, fifth from the left, is a former teacher and friend of Teresa Burke. It was a portion of her property which was purchased for the school site. Ms. Durando hosted a post ceremony luncheon at her home, within a short walking distance from the site.



View from the podium of the campus site.



Eric Sorenson addresses the attendees.