



Technology Center kicks off \$45 million campus reconstruction

Nov. 13 Community Featured Story 1 comment

By Traci Chapman

Canadian Valley Technology Center's El Reno campus has seen a metamorphosis – from destruction to rebirth.

Last Thursday was a time to celebrate that renewal, center officials said. With a groundbreaking marking the start of construction attended by dignitaries, center officials, staff, students, residents and more, shovels touched dirt on a \$45 million project that will end with a new campus along Route 66 in El Reno.

It was a big change of scene from June 1, 2013, the day after the widest-ever recorded tornado swept across the campus, demolishing all nine buildings on it. Although a small portion of one building remained, the devastation was deemed a total loss, Canadian Valley Technology Superintendent Dr. Greg Winters said. The EF-5, 2.6-mile wide tornado logged wind speeds as high as 296 mph, according to National Weather Service data.



Canadian Valley Technology Center Assistant Superintendent Bill Bradley, left, shares a laugh with Superintendent Dr. Greg Winters during a Nov. 6 groundbreaking of the new \$45 million El Reno campus. (Traci Chapman/Gazette)

The one gift in the storm was that no one was injured at the college, although 15 people were onsite with the tornado hit, Winters said. The last of the children in the school's daycare facility had been picked up about an hour before, Oklahoma Secretary of State Chris Benge said.

"My, my how we have been tested – we've passed every test with the highest marks," CVTC Assistant Superintendent Bill Bradley said. "In the face of adversity, our people stepped up to the plate and hit a home run every single time."

"In the aftermath, the school was tasked with relocating 130 employees and 19 programs," said. "School started on time in August – that's an amazing accomplishment to me."

On Thursday, the official start of the rebuilding process began with an official groundbreaking ceremony. Work will now begin on a \$44 rebuild of the El Reno campus, utilizing insurance funds and \$12 million approved through an April 1 bond issue vote.

In an election spanning several counties, 62.7 percent of those casting ballots gave the proposal a thumb's up. Unlike bond issues for common education, technology center issues require only a simple majority for approval.

"It was very gratifying that people approved what we proposed and understand our importance to the community," Superintendent Dr. Greg Winters said at that time.

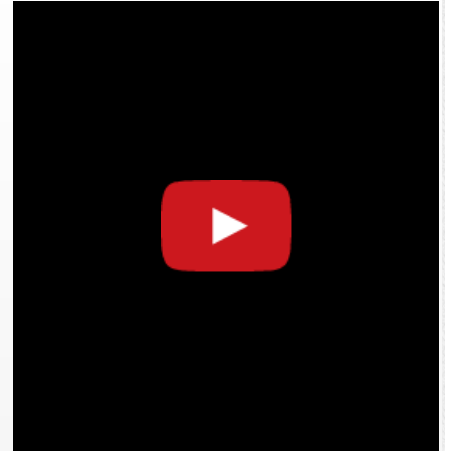
Skeletal steel and concrete was salvaged from parts of two buildings, and the center's business and industry services division on the west end of campus was reconstructed during summer 2013. While the school was fully insured, construction estimates topped out at about \$45 million because of needed code improvements, landscaping and safe room construction, as well as parking lots and driveways, Winters said. Voters' confidence in the school filled that gap, the superintendent said.

The bond issue also helped with storm shelter funding on campus, while Lions Club International provided funds for two saferooms on the site, El Reno/Holt campus director Gayla Lutts said. When completed, those shelters would hold up to 1,200 people. Winters said about 1,000 to 1,200 people attend or visit the technology center campus daily.

"Any building we build ever again will have a safe room in it," he said. "We're building the safest technology



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center in the United States of America.”

Officials said they expected the project to be completed sometime in August 2016.

“It’s amazing to think that the tornado came right across this site were standing on right now and in 18 months we will have a whole new campus to celebrate,” Winters said.

1 Comment



kate kearby

November 15, 2014 at 7:43 pm

careful someone will be looking for the missing blades. 😊 glad to see this come back, hope to see the new fairgrounds soon too, big boom to the county!

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