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Cabrillo gets expansion money

By DIANE NOLAND

STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — The sun lit up the city Thursday and receipt of a \$3.2 million check for the expansion of the Cabrillo College Watsonville Center brightened the faces of a roomful of city and college officials and members of the business community.

"This is a bright day in the history of the Pajaro Valley," said Watsonville Mayor Betty Bobeda as she thanked Philip Singerman, head of

the Economic Development Administration, and U.S. Rep. Sam Farr, D-Carmel, who presented the check to the city during a luncheon and press conference at the Cabrillo Center.

"The goal of the project is to expand the existing Watsonville Training Center to increase educational and skill training for the unemployed and under-skilled workers in



Michael McCollum

Watsonville Councilman Tony Campos (center) listens as Ned Medonia (left) the city's economic development director, talks Thursday with U.S. Rep. Sam Farr at Cabrillo College's Watsonville Center after expansion of the center was announced.

the area, which will enhance job opportunities and economic growth," Singerman said.

The federal grant, in addition to \$1.2 million promised by the City of Watsonville's Redevelopment Agency and \$200,000 from the college foundation, will construct a new 4-story building of approximately 26,250 square feet now in preliminary design for some 18 classrooms, a learning laboratory, lecture hall, office space and a combination bookstore cafe. The facility will be built behind the existing center at Union and Maple streets.

The expansion of the college in Watsonville will allow local people to become more competitive in the global market for the jobs of the future, Farr said.

"This is a community that's going places," he said, crediting the support for the center's expansion to the collaborative effort of the community college, city, state and federal officials.

"No one segment can succeed without help from all," Farr said. "(This is) a collaborative effort using limited funds in a creative way."

The focus will continue to be occupational programs at the Watsonville Center, said John Hurd, Cabrillo College president. Cabrillo College offers 23 vocational courses of study, he said.

In 1987, the Watsonville facility served 425 students. It now serves 1,200 and the new expanded center is projected to enroll between 1,800 and 4,000 students by 2005, Hurd said.

"The most realistic estimate is 2,500 to 3,000," he said.

With welfare reform, more training situations will be needed such as community colleges that are close to home, accessible and affordable, Farr said.

Studies show that the majority of future job capacities will require more than high school and less than a four-year college degree, Hurd said.

"That's where we are," Hurd said. "Those are the people who will contribute to the quality of life in this area. This (grant) is for job training and we do that — and we'll do more in the years to come."

A full curriculum is proposed for the Watsonville Center that will take students through several semesters before the need to transfer to the main Aptos campus, said Rachel Mayo, center director.

Since 1989, the EDA has invested \$7.7 million in Watsonville, including the \$3.2 million for the Cabrillo expansion. Some of the projects federal grants have made possible are the small business incubator downtown, the parking structure at the corner of Beach and Rodriguez streets and \$2.5 million assisted with the upgrade on the waste water treatment plant.

REFERENCE

WATSONVILLE
REGISTER-PAJAORNIAN
November 1, 1996