

Donors get sneak peek at Seymour

By **ROBIN MUSITELLI**
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SANTA CRUZ — Though it won't officially open until March, donors who contributed to the Seymour Marine Discovery Center will get a first glimpse through the aquarium glass at a private dedication Saturday.

The new aquarium and education center overlooks the Monterey Bay on Santa Cruz's Westside at Long Marine Laboratory. The 16,250-square-foot center includes galleries full of aquariums and exhibits, touch tanks, an 85-foot blue whale skeleton, and a gift and book shop.

The invitation-only event will honor the private donors who contributed to the \$6.25 million center. The family of H. Boyd Seymour will be guests of honor in recognition of their \$2 million gift, according to UC Santa Cruz spokesman Tim Stephens.

Scheduled to attend are UCSC Chancellor M.R.C. Greenwood; Leon Panetta, former chief of staff under President Clinton; and Gary Griggs, director of UCSC's Institute of Marine Sciences.

Unlike other aquariums, the Seymour center will focus on the work of researchers in UCSC's Institute of Marine Sciences, which operates Long Marine Laboratory.

"The idea is to give visitors an understanding of the ocean and the wonderful life it supports while at the same time opening a window into how scientists ask questions, make observations and figure things out," said Julie Barrett Heffington, center director.

The center's exhibit space will look something like a research laboratory. Interactive stations will provide "hands-on" experiences. In addition to the exhibit galleries, the center has a hall for public lectures and films, a teaching laboratory for marine biology courses and classrooms for elementary through high school students.

One of the classrooms is a wet lab with running seawater, where students can examine live sea creatures.

The Seymour center replaces the Joseph M. Long Marine Laboratory, which has operated since 1978 from a former storage facility on the bluffs north of Natural Bridges State Beach.

The new center is expected to accommodate 80,000 to 100,000 visitors a year, about three times the number that visited the Long Marine Lab.

The grand opening celebration for the public is set for March 11-12. The hours will be 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. For more information, call 459-4308.

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LONG'S MARINE LAB

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