Vang Pao Elementary School

New School Opens

Vang Pao Elementary School opened to students with the start of the 2012-13 school year on August 20, 2012. Vang Pao Elementary is the district’s first new school since Williams and Olimos elementary schools were completed in 2007. Nearly 800 students have enrolled at the campus, which is north of Sequoia Middle School at Heaton and Cedar avenues. (4100 E. Heaton Ave.) The principal is Teresa Calderon.

School Named for Revered Hmong Leader

The campus is named General Vang Pao, a Hmong soldier who rose to command a secret army of highly-effective CIA-trained and supported forces that fought against the Pathet Lao and People's Army of Vietnam during the 1960s and 1970s. Vang Pao immigrated to the United States after the communists seized power in Laos in 1975. He was an esteemed elder of the American Hmong people and helped with the resettlement of Hmong refugees in the United State, many of whom experienced the war or the reprisals that followed. Vang Pao spent considerable time in Fresno, where many Hmong have resettled (Fresno Unified has more than 5,000 Hmong-speaking students), and was supportive of his countrymen and their families pursuing education. He died in January 2011.

Dedication Celebrates New Opportunities

Visitors from around the country are expected to attend the dedication ceremony for Vang Pao Elementary School on Saturday, September 8, 2012. The school was built with funds from the Measure K bond, approved by voters in 2001; the cost of construction was $16 million. The opening of the school eases overcrowding in the southeast area and offers a state-of-the-art campus with innovative teaching strategies and technology.

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