



CONTACT: Della Elliott, GCCCD Public Information, (619) 644-7690
della.elliott@gcccd.edu

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Ribbon-cutting, jog to mark reopening of Cuyamaca College track

Guests to join track team for a victory lap celebrating \$150,000 resurfacing

EL CAJON – A \$150,000 resurfacing and reopening of Cuyamaca College’s track will be celebrated 10-11 a.m. Thursday with a ribbon-cutting and victory lap as the college community and others join the track and cross-country teams for a trot around the quarter-mile track. Lending campus spirit in his inimitable way will be the college mascot, the Cuyamaca Coyote.

With the much-anticipated repair, the track can reclaim its status as the region’s premiere track for community college competition, college officials note.

And with the track’s frequent use by the community at large, area residents and schools will also benefit from the repair project.

“Our track is used year-round by faculty, staff, students and the community from sunrise to sunset,” said Dr. Geraldine M. Perri, college president. “To have the track returned to its pristine shape is wonderful for both aesthetic and safety reasons.”

The all-weather, rubberized Atlas Poly-5000 track – the only competition-grade track at a San Diego County community college – was touted as state-of-the-art when it was built 12 years ago as part of Cuyamaca’s \$7.5 million sports complex, but with the track exceeding its 10-year life without the necessary resurfacing, it became rutted and, in some spots, worn down to its asphalt base.

“It was unsafe for competition and practice,” Patrick Thiss, coach of the college’s conference champion men’s track and field team, said. “We had seen a rise in shin splints over the last several seasons. Had we been unable to complete this project this fall, we would have had to train at a local high with an all-weather surface.”

Athletic director Cathy Bowyer is looking forward to the track regaining its prominence on the competition scene.

“The track resurfacing will allow us to host more meets here at Cuyamaca,” she said. “We are just thrilled to have the acclaim to be able to do this.”

Among the attendees at the Oct. 5 commemoration will be a representative of the Cuyamaca College Foundation, which contributed \$50,000 for the refurbishing of the NCAA-approved competition track – the same track used at the U.S. Olympic Training Center.

“We were very happy to make the donation because, in addition to benefiting the college, the track benefits the community,” said foundation president Patty McCormack, who explained the \$50,000 donation was part of the \$105,000 lump sum the group gifted to Cuyamaca last year.

Bowyer said the track with its pastoral setting cradled in the foothills of Rancho San Diego is heavily used by joggers in the community, as well as youngsters and teens involved in youth and intramural sports.

“The community uses our track all the time – they love it,” she said. “Outside small programs use it, as well as the junior high and high schools. The cross-country teams do speed work or interval training on the track.”

So popular is the eight-lane track that some runners ignored posted signs about its closure for repair in September, Bowyer said.

“We’ve had to chase a few of them off,” she said with a chuckle.

The unique track, with its rounded shape and its forgiving styrene rubber and polyurethane surface, is particularly well-suited for training, she said.

“The track is wider than typical to accommodate a soccer field in its infield as opposed to more rectangular football field,” Bowyer said. “The turns are wider with this track. With the more elongated tracks, the turns are sharper and the stress greater on the legs. As for the surface, runners will find the track has a lot more give, now that the repair work has been done.”

The balance of the cost of the track’s renovation was covered by state scheduled-maintenance monies and funds from Prop. R, the \$207 million local bond measure approved by East County voters in 2002 to repair and build new facilities at Cuyamaca and Grossmont colleges.

“This project is just one of the countless reasons why we are so grateful to the East County public for its support of our colleges through Prop. R and the Cuyamaca College Foundation,” said Governing Board President Deanna Weeks. “And with this particular project, the benefit to the public is especially evident. We are happy to share this wonderful resource with the community.”

At Cuyamaca, Prop. R is helping fund the construction of a science and technology mall; a communication arts building to house disciplines including English, speech, American Sign Language, and the performing arts; and a student center.

At Grossmont College, Prop. R is funding a new science building and a digital arts and sculpture complex that includes a digital arts building housing conventional and digital art and photography labs, video and audio studios, and faculty offices. The sculpture building will provide a sculpture studio, a 3-D design /jewelry studio, and an outdoor sculpture work yard.

Cuyamaca College is at 900 Rancho San Diego Parkway in Rancho San Diego. Grossmont College is at 8800 Grossmont College Drive in El Cajon.

For more information about the colleges and district, go to www.gcccd.edu.