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César Chávez Library opens to the public Monday

Building a 'living room for the community'

By Betty Reid

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The new César Chávez Branch Library will celebrate a grand opening in January, but the public can visit the campus Monday.

Phoenix's 15th library, a gray facility sunken into the earth with a window view of a lake and the South Mountain range, has been under construction since 2005. The library is one of Laveen

Village's newest public buildings at Baseline Road and 35th Avenue.

The 25,000-square-foot structure is one of three regional libraries that offer 750,000 CDs, books and DVDs, and 150,000 books. Library officials project the Chávez branch will accommodate 400,000 residents in southwest Phoenix.

"We are done with the project," said Art Jordan, director of commercial construction for the Scottsdale-based Linthicum.

The library is next to the César Chávez High School campus and César Chávez District Park. Minor work, like drywall and masonry, continued last

week. Librarians were busy logging in DVDs and arranging CDs on shelves.

Plenty of parking is available south of the library. When visitors approach the entrance they will see a bronze sculpture shaped of two giant mesquite seeds connected by a starlike shape.

"It is a symbol of knowledge," said Karl J. Kendall, Chávez branch manager.

Chávez's library's outside walls are protected from the sun by opening the building to the north for daylight and to the south for a view of South Mountain. Striking features inside the library in-



BETTY REID/THE REPUBLIC

Art Jordan (left) and Karl J. Kendall pose outside the César Chávez Branch Library.

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clude a room for computer classes, a children's space and a teen area and walls of vibrant bright colors of green, orange or aqua.

A much-needed meeting room now is available. Before construction started, residents had the chance to offer ideas about the design.

"One of the things I heard early on is that Laveen considers this library to be the living room of its community," Jordan said. "They don't apparently have a lot of public meeting space and so they were looking forward to getting space here."

Other features include access to 48 flat-screen comput-

About the library

■ A lakefront setting, deeply sunken into the natural-grass berms surrounding the lake, which insulates the building's exterior walls.

■ The west and east walls are protected from the sun by opening the building to the north for natural daylight and to south for shaded views of the South Mountain range.

■ A roof structure floats above the butterfly-shaped exterior

walls, soaring to the north for a dramatic street frontage.

■ A large community meeting room and a place specifically designed for teenagers and young kids.

■ Chávez Branch was designed as a green building. One element that defines Chávez Branch as a green build is its low-water-use landscaping.

Source: Linthicum

ers and another five in the teen area. The library will be equipped so that it will control student use by having them make reservations.

Funding for the library, \$11

million, came from the 2001 Phoenix Citizens Bond Program and impact fees collected from developers.