

# Nonprofits acquire a 'classic' building

If parking space was hard to come by Tuesday afternoon on East Jones Street, it was because several hundred turned out for the grand opening of the Community Cornerstone Center for Nonprofits.

"A Classic has become a Cornerstone," said the invitation. The "classic" refers both to Coca-Cola and to the art deco-ish facade of the former Coca-Cola Bottling Company building, one of the most interesting in town.

The Hutton Foundation of Santa Barbara negotiated with Coca-Cola to buy the building and perhaps save it from gross distortion and mutilation. This building, one of Santa Maria's few architectural jewels, has always been a delight to passers-by.

Luminaries of Santa Barbara County's nonprofit world turned out en masse to celebrate the new community showpiece and resource.

More than 300 guests oohed and awed at the handsome interior, which has been divided into inviting office spaces, some small and some not so small. The decor is gray with red accents. Lots of glass blocks preserve the art deco feeling. The conference room should inspire a horde of productive meetings, and the adjacent kitchen is big enough for more than one cook. The overall feeling is modern, bright and sunny, and welcoming.

Coconut-fried shrimp with apricot sauce, taquitos, sausage chunks, filled phyllo triangles and meatballs were among the many hors d'oeuvres served. Plates of fresh fruit and veggies tempted all, as did the red and white wines. There were Girl Scout cookies galore, compliments of the scouts who occupy one of the larger office spaces.

Board members of the Santa Maria Philharmonic were all aglow as they showed off their new digs. Board member Tara Nelson gave me a flier about an upcoming master class for piano students that the philharmonic is sponsoring on May 9.

The Discovery Museum's capital campaign chairman, Chris Slaughter, told me that she is very excited about the next opening that will be held at the Coca-Cola building site. The Discovery Museum is slated to occupy the warehouse at the East Jones location when it is revamped. The guests gathered on the patio,

which is circled by a concrete bench, at the back of the building for a dedication ceremony. Santa Barbara County Superintendent of Schools Bill Cirone said a few words before Santa Maria's mayor, Larry Lavagnino, who recalled having played around the building when he was a boy. Hutton Foundation President Tom Hutton spoke glowingly about the foundation's participation in the project, and said rather pointedly, "How nice it is to deal with the city of Santa Maria."

Quick, somebody, put that on the city's Web site!

Coca-Cola Sales Center Manager Dan Suchecki complimented all on the roaring success of the rehab of the building. "We are standing where the Dumpster used to be," Mr. Suchecki told the crowd. "We couldn't be happier to be partners with the Hutton Foundation." Mr. Suchecki added that he hoped "the spirit of Coca-Cola is still alive in

the building."

It seemed like everybody was there. I was glad to see Rose and Mort Russell, community activists, who just finished appearing in a local play. They must be the West Coast's new Lunt and Fontaine. Lompoc's Joyce Howerton, northern Santa Barbara County program coordinator for the Fund of Santa Barbara, was excited about the space her group occupies. Santa Barbaran Gail McMahon, president of the board of the Family Service Agency, was all smiles.

The Nonprofit Support Center, which will have an office with foundation database resource material for NSC members, had a full contingent on hand.

I spotted Karen Miller Tunnell, executive director of the GenSpan Foundation, in the lobby, as well as the Urbanskes — Tom and Barbara. Ed Moss, from the PCPA Foundation, enjoyed the opportunity to connect with other foundation reps. Santa Barbara Foundation President Chuck Slosser drove up from Santa Barbara for the event, as did many Santa Barbara Foundation affiliates.

This classic cornerstone is a welcome addition to Santa Maria. We can't wait until the Discovery Museum opens next door!

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## santa maria notebook

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*A Classic*

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