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## **250 gather for Palo Alto campus groundbreaking**

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Standing before some 250 invited guests Sunday in a tent in a Palo Alto construction site, Carol Saal described the groundbreaking of the new Taube Koret Campus for Jewish Life as the culmination of a “series of beshert moments” — not to mention seven years of fundraising, negotiating and decision-making.

Those “beshert moments” included obtaining a 12-acre parcel of land in 2002, a year after the dot-com bust; raising \$32 million in the initial six-month period; and winning the bid for the land against nine commercial developers. Nearly \$127 million of the \$140 million needed to complete the campus has already been raised.

Outside the tent, on the site of the former Sun Microsystems campus, was a giant dirt mound, backhoes and multiple trailers. Inside, in front of the speakers’ podium, was a large sand pile surrounded by burlap, flanked with brass-plated shovels for the ceremonial groundbreaking. Elegant hors d’oeuvres tables stood at the back.

The big tent gathering brought together major donors and multiple organizations to celebrate a milestone for the Peninsula Jewish community, which has the largest and fastest-growing Jewish population in the Bay Area. When completed in 2009, the 8 1/2-acre campus will be the home of the Oshman Family Jewish Community Center; a senior housing complex, 899 Charleston, developed by the Jewish Home of San Francisco; regional headquarters for the Jewish Community Federation and offices for other Jewish nonprofits.

These groups, said Saal, “will be living together for generations to come. The whole will be far greater than the sum of its parts.”

Saal, who is campus fundraising chair and vice president of the Taube Koret Campus for Jewish Life, was joined on the stage by a number of community representatives. Among them: Rabbi Sheldon Marder of the Jewish Home, who delivered the invocation; Tad Taube, president of the Koret Foundation and chairman of Taube Philanthropies; Ken Oshman, whose family foundation presented a \$10 million gift to the campus; David Friedman, chair of the Jewish Home; James Koshland, president of the Taube Koret Campus; John Pritzker, JCF president; and Bruce Fram, Oshman Family JCC president.

In the front row of the audience, Albert and Janet Schultz, for whom the JCC on Arastradero Road is named, received a standing ovation. That complex was reclaimed by the Palo Alto Unified School District to reopen Terman Middle School, creating a major challenge for the JCC and other offices.

Sunday's groundbreaking represented an ingathering. For Oshman and his wife, Barbara, who grew up in small-town Texas amid 50 or 60 Jewish families, "the local campus for Jewish life" was a 2,000 square-foot building, with a linoleum-tiled floor, a stage and a kitchen. "We called it 'the hall,'" he said.

"For Barbara and me, the Oshman Family JCC is a marvelous, modern, urban extension of exactly the same community gathering place — a place not for a handful of families but for thousands of families."

Meanwhile, Taube commented on the fact that non-Jewish community members have contributed to the complex, which will house a fitness center, concert and lecture facilities, a library and business center, as well as senior residences for independent and assisted living.

"This project is an example of what happens when people collaborate," he said.

Sitting in the audience were a number of people who have put down deposits for apartments at 899 Charleston. Eph Cannon, who has lived in Palo Alto for 55 years, said the new complex is "life-changing," giving him the opportunity to live in a Jewish community with friends like Sam Silverman of San Carlos, whom he's known for half a century.

Meanwhile, Sol Kutner of San Carlos is getting impatient. "They say it will take two years, but I'm ready to move in now."

For Shelley Hebert, former executive director of the campus, "this was the day I dreamed of and imagined in my mind for six years.

"I knew we were not just creating a place. We were creating a community."