

# Science institute rises from dream to 2-story reality



To be sure, a lot of bartering, arm-twisting and plain, old-fashioned politics surrounded the \$6 million miracle near the corner of 51st and Market streets.

Yes, a lot of politics went into the reconstruction project that has produced the new 15,000-square-foot

home of the south side's landmark Elementary Institute of Science — EIS to all.

The grand undertaking was carried out over a decade. It actually needed, and got, support from countless sources, including the city of San Diego and others throughout the community.

Heck, there was a lot of loud talking going on about its possible pros and cons. It was called everything from a development boondoggle to a community's saving grace.

But a levelheaded woman like Doris Anderson will tell you none of the counterproductive stuff even matters anymore. And when she does, it's with thanks to

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## Support for institute widespread

all the project supporters, especially the prime moving Jacobs Family Foundation.

Today, the dream is reality. EIS, the remarkable nonprofit enrichment program that, over four decades, has guided thousands of youngsters into the field of science and technology and into fulfilling work they might never have considered, is in new digs.

The airy, two-story, high-tech center, complete with state-of-the-art computers, photo lab and library, is supported solely on donations and grants.

And the challenge now is for the after-school and summer-time program for 7- to 13-year-olds to be even better than it's

been.

That's Doris' domain. She's been the Elementary Institute's executive director for the past 16 years.

She saw the building project through, from beginning to end.

And she says she never doubted that the work would get done, even though she'd have to, at times, reassure some anxious young charges with explanations about unexpected delays.

"We've gone from 2,000 square feet to 15,000," Doris says, "and it used to cost \$125,000 a year to run things, now it's \$50,000 — my utility bill in the old place used to be \$80 a month, now it's \$3,000."

"But we have more kids. It's no time to fall back and take a breath. We have to keep things going, moving up and working well" for the students.

Already, since EIS moved in to the new building last August, the executive director adds, enrollment has increased from



Things are looking up for Doris Anderson and her charges at the Elementary Institute of Science, now that they've moved into their new building. Jerry Rife / Union-Tribune

300 to more than 400. More children are expected to enroll in the coming summer months.

Though Doris clearly won't slow down in face of the challenges, she'll always take time

to reflect.

And on this late January day, she thinks back to times when no one but eternal optimists and dreamers such as she could envision the project ever

being completed.

Some of the staunchest doubters were among the many kids in the program, who worked on class projects to raise funds and help design certain parts of the building.

"The hardest thing was telling the kids, when there were delays, that the project wouldn't be ready when we'd say it would be," Doris says. "There were some, who thought they'd be in the building in their last year in the program and it didn't happen."

"That was difficult."

But Doris tells you what kept her optimism high, even despite those times when young hearts had to be disappointed, was the knowledge that no matter what, there was always so much widespread support out there.

"It was difficult going to people and organizations, asking for money, both for the building project and for the educational program," she says.

"But people really understood

and they gave — they love the program."

Doris knows the EIS reputation has a whole lot to do with that.

Almost from the day it was opened in that 2,000-square-foot residence in April 1964 by founder Tom Watts, EIS has been a boon to youngsters and their families.

"This is a part of town where youngsters don't always motivate toward science and now hundreds more every year get jazzed on careers in the field, thanks to this enrichment program."

"This building is awesome — it's truly a state-of-the-art science and technology learning center," Doris declares, while seated in her new office. "But this program is part of the community — this is where we are most loved. We have to keep it going, getting better and better."

"How could you not do your part in that?"