



CHARLOTTE COUNTY
Economic Development

WEEKEND WAVE

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Friday Economic Roundup

Babcock Neighborhood School breaks ground

By **SOMMER BROKAW** Staff Writer Charlotte Sun

CHARLOTTE COUNTY - Babcock Ranch developer Syd Kitson said he dreamed of developing "the first solar-powered town in America" over a decade ago.

Now he's excited about starting to see it come to fruition with the groundbreaking ceremony for the town's school.

"There's nothing more meaningful to me than seeing this school come out of the woodwork," Kitson said.

Some parents, students and community partners attended the groundbreaking ceremony held at Founder's Square off State Road 31 on Monday morning to learn more about the Babcock Neighborhood School. The new public charter school, for kindergarten through eighth-grade children, is slated to open in fall 2017, as part of a developing Babcock Ranch town in southeast Charlotte County.

Highlights of the groundbreaking ceremony included showcasing drones that were able to capture pictures of the expansive campus, opportunities for attendees to make handprints on one of the solar panels and a garden project for children.

These projects were based on the interactive, Green-STEAM curriculum planned for the school, according to a press release. Collaborative Educational Network Consultant Christy

Noe explained this "may sound like a mouthful," but STEAM just stands for "science, technology, engineering, art and math," and green means that the "green spaces" that make up Babcock Ranch will serve as the place for learning.

"A lot of kids they Google stuff," Noe said. "There's lots of lessons that could be learned when you're actually getting your hands dirty."

Babcock Ranch straddles the border of Charlotte and Lee counties and will eventually be home to about 50,000 people," according to a press release from Kitson and Partners, the real estate investment and development company. "As the only public school within a ten-mile radius of the new town center - BNS is also a more convenient option for neighboring families."

A challenge has been getting student enrollment in a town that's still developing, but Kitson said that Florida's new open enrollment law, which allows school choice, has helped them with this.

Babcock Neighborhood School just began accepting applications over Thanksgiving weekend and already has accepted 56 applications, about 55 percent of which are from families in Charlotte County and 45 percent of which are from Lee County families.

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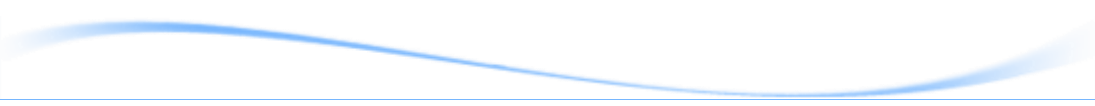
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