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Our Valley: Building More Schools than Ever Before



Aerial View of Madera Unified School District's newest school project: Matilda Torres High School. The 277,000 sq. ft campus over 55 acres will be completed in late 2020. This will be the third high school for MUSD in Madera, CA. Inset photo: Assistant Project Manager, Stephen Hamett, with Harris Construction - standing in front of some of the first steel to go up on the Matilda Torres High School project.

Harris Construction - Trusted Builder for Central California Schools



Trusted Community Builder

Harris Construction Co., Inc. is the longest-running builder of educational facilities in the Central Valley. Based in Fresno and locally owned since 1914, Harris has built - or modernized - hundreds of Valley schools. In the past 25 years, Harris has completed more than 100 of those education-related facilities and the company is going full-steam-ahead with exciting projects up and down the Valley.

"With the improving economy over the past decade, we're seeing not only a bigger volume of school projects but also larger-scale school projects needing to be built throughout the

Central Valley," said Stephen Hamett, Assistant Project Manager for Harris Construction. Hamett is currently on the new Matilda Torres High School project in Madera (Madera Unified School District), working under Project Manager Michael Marsh.

"In years past, schools were focused on updating and modernizing, so there were lots of small- and medium-sized projects throughout the construction industry," said Hamett, "of which most any construction company could handle. Now we are seeing a lot of bigger, new campus projects coming in, which I believe Harris is especially well-suited to do.

"On the Matilda Torres High School project alone, we have 120-130 workers onsite on a daily basis; in 1-3 months we'll have 350-400 people on this jobsite every day. It takes an experienced construction firm like ours to manage projects of that scale. I feel Harris is the perfect size for building a large volume of public works projects. We're really set up to handle complex projects with ease and know-how. We have a terrific back-office support group handling payroll and subcontractor labor regulations (including certified payroll and skilled labor compliance), plus a talented team of craftspeople, dedicated management, a strong financial backing, and great working relationships with local suppliers. And our clients love working with us!

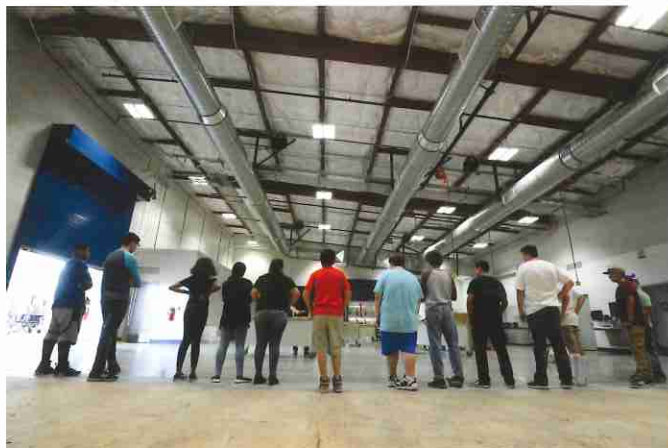
"We also have a number of other large-scale public projects



Career-Tech and S.T.E.M./S.T.E.A.M facilities are being built on multiple campuses throughout the Central Valley by Harris Construction. This CTEC facility is on the Kermit Koontz Education Complex in Fresno, CA, and opened its doors to students last month.

being built simultaneously up and down the Valley, including Tilley Elementary (Central Unified) and a new high school for Sanger Unified to name a few."

Hamett knows construction. He's the third generation in his family to be in the industry. He got his start at the age of six – when he verbally "popped off" to his grandmother. The next morning his father drove him to Fresno Ag Hardware where his dad purchased a push broom, cut it down to size, and little Hamett swept and cleaned the day away on his dad's jobsite.



Vocational high school students get a sneak-peek into their future classroom at CTEC (and a quick nailing lesson from their instructor). The Career Tech Education Charter is part of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools.

Sixteen years later, Hamett received his degree in Construction Management from Fresno State. That little broom was more than a lesson; it was the start of an amazing career.

Another area of construction growth in the Valley is technical and career education facilities where students learn about the trades, and to work not only with their minds, but with their hands.

Harris has built numerous Career/Tech schools in the Valley, including in Merced, Dinuba, Caruthers, Clovis (Clovis High

School Computer Lab & Auto Facilities, plus the Energy Center at Buchanan), and Fresno. These new vocational schools often have acronym names like STEM, STEAM, or TECH (with emphasis on Science, Technology, Art, Ag, Engineering, and Math) and are generally for 5th - 12th grade students.

One of the newest Career Tech facilities built by Harris opened last month in Fresno at the Kermit Koontz Education Complex: The Career Tech Education Charter (CTEC) for the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools. Gerad Hudler (Assistant Superintendent to Project Manager Joe Vasquez) and the Harris team especially enjoyed working on this project, partly because of the new technology involved - and partly because the future teachers and their excited students kept sneaking in to see their new classrooms.

"The kids (and I) are so excited about this new facility,"



Assistant Superintendent, Gerad Hudler, handed off the newly-completed CTEC facility last month to the Fresno County School of Superintendents and team at the Kermit Koontz Education Center.

said Hudler. "The interactive equipment we installed in this building for them is amazing – including 3-D printers, robots, welding stations, metal shop machinery, rolling work tables, tools... even heavy-construction equipment simulators. (Ok, I admit, I even tried one of the simulators – and they are like the real deal. While you are looking into 3-4 monitors to "see" the tractor you are manipulating, your seat vibrates and jolts as your virtual-tractor bucket hits the virtual-ground – just as if you were on a real jobsite!) These students are going to graduate from high school with vo-

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cational knowledge AND experience of which many adults will be envious.

"School construction is also becoming more technical; there's hardly a ceiling tile without a device in it. We're using GPS to layout new jobs, there are "Columbine" locks on doors, school security and safety is now part of every school project. And the regulations we follow to build projects are longer than ever. I like that Harris is a solid company that can help keep us informed and educated on the new codes and interpretations of the ever-changing rules, especially those from DSA (Division of the State Architect; the regulatory agency for all school construction). Smaller construction companies don't have the resources or safety/risk personnel to help me do a better job for clients in these areas. I don't know that I could do my job anywhere else as well as I do it here. I am fully supported at Harris.

"And what a great work environment. I look forward to work every day (especially when we do concrete pours!). I am busier at Harris than anywhere I've worked - and I like that. I like our employee events, too. I truly feel blessed to work here."

With many other large-scale construction projects going on in the Valley - including re-alignment of Highway 99, California High Speed Rail, and other big public works projects - labor and materials are becoming scarce for many local construction companies and subcontractors.

"The pool of experienced construction labor available to work in the Valley right now is small," said Geno James, Senior Project Manager at Harris Construction. "I know some construction companies are having a difficult time hiring skilled workers due to so many projects absorbing the talent. With Harris, we have a core group of management that's been around for a long time - 10, 15, 20, 25+ years. Our clients build a rapport with us - we build relationships with them throughout the building of their projects - they know they can trust us with their most critical and complex projects and that we have the dedicated and long-term staff to do it.

"Due to the recent glut of construction going on, many contractors are also having to make early payments to reserve pricing and installation dates for subcontractors, concrete, steel, and materials. If you can't pay early, you're not going

to get the items or installers you need when you need them. Luckily Harris has the buying power and can do this for its clients, but smaller construction firms would be hard pressed to pay out large sums of money in advance to reserve pricing and installation dates. It is critical for us to stay on time and on budget for our customers.

"Like Hamett and Hudler, I too grew up in a family devoted to construction. I even started out with a jobsite broom over my summer vacations. Once at Fresno State though, I became interested in architecture... but then realized that Construction Management was the best degree for me. I've been with Harris ever since I graduated and I've seen a lot of changes in these past 16 years.

"School construction is changing, as campuses are becoming more tech-savvy, and architects are designing more complex and interesting educational facilities. Gone are the days of chalkboards and blurry overhead projectors on a table. Now we're building entire-wall white boards with web-based, ceiling mounted projectors that accept any input device, integrated sound, self-set thermostats in every room, site security, and campus intrusion protection. Floors are polished concrete, and maintenance is planned out far in advance to reduce costs. Energy management systems run water-energy and solar panels. We're building schools that are interactive, safe, sustainable, and beautiful.

"Our school projects are so unique and inspirational - I would have loved to attend them when I was a student! It really makes me - and the entire team at Harris - proud to be the trusted builders of such incredible campuses throughout the Valley. We appreciate your trust and look forward to building your upcoming projects."



Senior Project Manager, Geno James, has been with Harris Construction for 16 years and has built seven schools in that time.



Harris Construction also specializes in building food- and dairy-processing plants, hospitals, private facilities, and civic campuses. This project is a 2-story, 63,000 sq. ft. detention center being built in Sonora, CA. Senior Project Manager, Geno James, is leading the team on this Harris project.