

Columbia remembered

Sun Valley firm wins contract for memorial

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SUN VALLEY — On the fourth anniversary of the Columbia Space Shuttle tragedy Thursday, an East San Fernando Val-

ley company said it won a contract it considers a special honor.

It will build a memorial to the Columbia and its crew on the site of a former shuttle design and manufacturing facility in Downey.

Tower General Contractors should break ground on the \$11.6 million Columbia Memorial Space Science & Learning Center in about a month.

This time next year it should be ready.

"We're really, really excited about it," said Alex Guerrero, executive vice president of the Sun Valley-based company. "It's a patriotic project and involves the hopes and dreams of the astronauts and the space program."

On Feb. 1, 2003, the Columbia shuttle — which was damaged during liftoff — broke

apart re-entering the atmosphere. All seven crew members — commander Rick D. Husband; pilot William C. McCool, payload commander Michael P. Anderson, payload specialist Ilan Ramon and mission specialists David M. Brown, Kalpana Chawla and Laurel Blair Salton Clark — perished.

In October the next year, both houses of Congress passed a resolution authored by Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard, D-Los Angeles, and co-sponsored by the entire contingent of California Representatives to Congress, naming Downey as the site for the memorial.

It will also be a tribute to the many people who have worked in the aviation and aerospace industry in Downey over seven decades.

And backers say it will have a major educational goal — enhancing space science knowledge and scientific literacy.

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Site will provide learning experiences

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The 18,000-square-foot facility will include active learning experiences that will educate students on various aspects of aerospace. They include:

- The Challenger Learning Center, which will feature a simulated space mission that will test the participant's decision-making skills.

- The Space Science Discov-

ery Zone where visitors will find a variety of interactive exhibits that help them explore principles of flight, living in space, the search for life beyond earth, and the origins of the universe.

- The Mars Robotics Lab, which will give young visitors the opportunity to design and program their own robots in order to complete a remote exploration mission to the

planet Mars.

- Historical displays of the men and women who contributed to the spirit of invention and innovation that led to the development of the aviation and aerospace industry in Downey and propelled the United States to a leadership role in space exploration.

Downey's role in the aerospace industry dates back to 1929. The city has seen large scale aircraft manufacturing, missile design and development, and ultimately, the design and production of the Apollo command and service

modules during the lunar program and development and production of the Space Shuttle Orbiters.

The NASA plant closed in 1999 and the city began a redevelopment effort. That will include a hospital complex, retail center, film production facilities and the memorial.

"The memorial will provide a way to extract something positive from the Columbia disaster," said Downey Mayor Rick Trejo.

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