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A preview of Everett new Schack Art Center

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Herald Writer

John and Idamae Schack's way of living has always been based on this philosophy: If you can imagine it, it can happen.

It's a dreamer's stance, but the Schacks were always more than dreamers. They were doers. And givers.

Lots of landmarks in Everett bear their gifts: Imagine Children's Museum. Historic Everett Theatre. Everett Public Library. The Everett Symphony.

On Tuesday, about 200 members of the Everett community gathered to thank the Schacks. Then they gave them something in return.

Under construction in the 2900 block of Hoyt Avenue in downtown Everett is an 80,000-square-foot, \$17.2 million structure.

When it opens in 2010, it will house artists and artwork, a glass shop and a gallery.

It will be a place where 15,000 students a year can be introduced to the world of creativity.

It will be a multi-use visual arts education center with lofts for artists.

And it will be known as the Schack Art Center.

The Arts Council of Snohomish County chose to rename the center and change its own name to the Schack Art Center in honor of philanthropists Idamae Schack and her late husband, John, for their dedication to the arts and cultural life of Everett.

The couple has over the years donated millions of dollars to the Everett community. But speakers who came to the renaming ceremony at the Monte Cristo Building on Wall Street in downtown Everett on Tuesday night said the Schacks certainly gave much more than dollars and cents.

Arts advocate Peter Newland challenged the audience to pick any point on the compass and said you will find the Schack's "inspiration, faith in people, forceful determination and generous spirit at work."

"We thank you for your vision, your trust, your leadership ... your grace and eloquence and your toughness and your sweet humor," Newland told Idamae Schack who sat in the audience. "But most of all for your love and caring for us, this place and the human race."

Afterward, Idamae Schack, who is 91, thanked the audience. She was then handed a fluorescent orange hard hat and, with help, she gingerly modeled it for a few seconds.

Following the ceremony, guides gave sneak preview tours of the gallery level of the new Schack Art Center. This 10-year dream of the arts council will incorporate flexible gallery and educational space with specialized artistic production areas and public viewing areas to watch the artists at work.

The four-story construction project includes the art center, which encompasses 19,000 square feet of the building and will be located beneath the upper levels where Artspace Projects Inc. will provide affordable housing for artists and their families.

"It's freakin' amazing that this is happening in Everett," glass artist Merrilee Moore said as she fantasized about where

she would be molding molten glass into artwork.

"I'm excited about what it will bring to the community," Moore said. "I'm an Everett native, and it's been a long time since something this exciting has happened, something this fabulous in my little old hometown of Everett."

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