

# L-SCC receives donation for local campus

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While South Lake High School currently offers courses from Lake-Sumter Community College to local residents, the community college district board has given its approval for the building of a satellite campus in the southern part of Lake County.

The official announcement came last Wednesday when the L-SCC board accepted 40 acres of land donated from a Clermont family on which the new campus would be built, college president Robert Westrick said.

"We see a lot of possibilities in the South Lake area. We're pleased with the developments and it adds more credentials to our program," he said in a telephone interview.

The land was donated by the Maury and Daryl Carter family, and consists of acreage east of Clermont along State Road 50, north of Hancock Road.

The quest to get a branch campus in Clermont to service south Lake residents has been some time in the making. Since becoming president at the Leesburg-based college two years ago, Westrick said he had been queried about the possibilities of such an endeavor. "In the first couple of weeks I was here, I made my way talking to people and giving speeches, and I knew that courses were offered at South Lake High, because of the growth factor there. I was approached and asked what it would take to do something like this in South Lake, and I said that dollar signs were very tight for capital out-lay funds."

He said that the requirements from Tallahassee on starting a satellite branch would be a minimum 40 acres, "and apparently, some people started looking into (finding land)."

Westrick credited Clermont City Manager Wayne Saunders and city council member and *South Lake Press* editor emeritus Ann Dupee with spearheading the land hunt.

The donation is based upon a five-year agreement between Lake-Sumter Community College and the Carter family's developers. Westrick explained that the college would have to start construction within that time frame, or the property would revert back to the ownership of the Carters at the agreement's end.

"We have to have something underway, then we'll have two years to complete it," the president stated.

Lake-Sumter has recently opened a similar branch campus in Sumterville, with classes expected to start in the fall semester. According to Westrick, L-SCC has an approximate enrollment of 2,900 in the fall, which varies with each term. He said the bulk of the enrollment numbers are centered in Leesburg's campus.

South Lake High School's campus course currently has an enrollment of "100 or so," Westrick noted.

What Clermont's campus would mean to enrollment was unclear. Westrick said if support could be built in south Lake County, the project would be seen as a truly positive addition. He said mixed classes of what the main L-SCC site offers would be offered in Clermont, as well as courses for associate degrees and business and computer classes, which were designated as needed, based upon an area needs assessment.

Westrick added that the process to get approval from the state's Division of Community Colleges and other official boards for the Clermont branch campus might take those five years, since capital out-lay funds from the state are "very tight."

"We're hoping that within the next few years that we can start the process with Tallahassee and get a few dollars," he said. "The clock is ticking and we're doing everything we can."