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Cal Poly Landscape Architecture Students Design Healing Garden for French Hospital

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Landscape architecture students from Cal Poly will design a healing garden at French Hospital Medical Center in San Luis Obispo as a memorial to San Luis Obispo firefighter Greg Otto.

The garden is the idea of two French Hospital Emergency Department nurses who wanted to continue the legacy of Otto and help cancer patients and their families cope with the disease. Otto, a firefighter in San Luis Obispo for more than 20 years, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in September 2004. He lost his battle with the disease last March.

The Cal Poly students are designing the garden as a soothing environment for patients and their families, as well as hospital employees. Located in a courtyard at the center of the hospital, the healing garden will be accessible to people with disabilities.

Cal Poly landscape architecture instructors Astrid Reeves and Christy Edstrom O’Hara are working with the students to create the design. The students’ efforts include a site visit, studio design sessions, design reviews and a final presentation. They will hold a public presentation at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 8, in the hospital auditorium, located on the north end of the facility, adjacent to the lobby.

French Hospital hopes to raise $50,000 to construct the garden later this year. The hospital seeks monetary contributions, volunteers, plants and other donated materials. Donors may purchase memorial stepping-stones inscribed with the name of a loved one.

To find out more or to contribute to the project, contact Debby Nicklas, executive director of the French Hospital Foundation, at (805) 542-6496.

The Landscape Architecture Department can be reached at (805) 756-1319.

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