New Schulte Road Bridge Will Make its Own History

A post World War II-era bridge over the Carmel River has been replaced with a span that better serves modern day residents, but not without a nod to the ingenuity of the past.

The Monterey County Resource Management Agency Public Works Division oversaw the project to replace the old one-lane Schulte Road Bridge. The new span is approximately 206 feet long, 32 feet wide and includes two traffic lanes and a separate pedestrian walkway.
The project began in 2012. Due to the sensitive habitat along the Carmel River, work was done during the drier months of the year, June to November.

During construction, the old bridge remained open to cross traffic while the first lane of the new bridge was built. Once the first new lane was completed, the old bridge was removed.

The original bridge was constructed in 1947 using surplus military steel and was designed by then County Public Works bridge engineer Chester Dudley. It was listed as a “unique bridge” in the 1984 Greater Monterey Peninsula Area Plan. A plaque commemorating the old bridge’s history can be found near the new span.

The plaque tells how the bridge was one of at least seven scrap-metal bridges that Chester Dudley designed in the decade following WWII. Dudley’s innovative and pragmatic approach to using military surplus materials allowed him to inexpensive build bridges to span rural waterways.

The total cost for the new Schulte Road Bridge Project might have raised Dudley’s eyebrows, but he surely would be proud of the results. The cost of the bridge was $6.2 million, with approximately $5 million in funding coming from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), $467,027 from the State Seismic Program, $582,994 from the Monterey County Road Fund, and $200,000 from Cal Am Water Company.
The word resilient is defined as “being able to become strong, healthy, or successful again after something bad happens.”

Organizers of a recent Resiliency Summit define it this way: “Resilience is the ability to cope with adversity, to learn from the experience, and to grow stronger as a result.”

The idea of creating a community that is resilient, and applying that concept in the wake of a disaster, brought a hundred community leaders together for a Resiliency Summit last month to learn more about this philosophy. Held at California State University Monterey Bay, the event was sponsored by the Health Department along with the Cities of Marina, Monterey and Seaside; the Presidio of Monterey, and CSUMB.

The day-long workshop was different from most preparedness programs. Instead of focusing on potential disasters and the aftermath, the focus was on how to build a community which is better able to respond and recover from a disaster, no matter when it strikes. As part of the program, attendees met in small groups to talk about what their companies or agencies are already doing to prepare for emergencies, which was later shared with the entire group.

The keynote speaker, Ana Marie Jones from Collaborating Agencies Responding to Disasters (CARD), introduced the attendees to the idea that by “investing in the community to build individual and collective capacity to solve problems, stronger united communities can be built. Then all people can survive, thrive and prosper in the face of disasters and any other challenges we may face.”

A follow-up summit is planned for Salinas in May of this year.
Deputy Robin Barajas has been named as the Monterey County Sheriff’s Office Deputy of the Year for 2013.

Barajas received the award at the Deputies Benefit Association’s holiday event in December of last year, and she was also honored at the Monterey County Peace Officers Association awards dinner this month.

Barajas began her career with the department in 2008 as a new recruit and she was promoted to Deputy Sheriff in 2009. She worked for two years in the County Jail and then was transferred to the Bailiff Unit, where she is assigned to the Salinas Courthouse entry screening station, as well as roving duties. Those duties include maintaining the security of the Courthouse complex, its employees and the general public, responding to and investigating suspicious activities and making arrests, writing reports, and assisting the general public.

Sergeant Jennifer West of the department’s Custody Operations, Court Division, nominated Barajas for the Deputy of the Year honor and says the award is a fitting one.

“She serves the county and the citizens with honor, dedication and commitment,” says West in describing Barajas. “She treats everyone with dignity and respect and makes sound and reasonable decisions in the manner that is best for the department and the public. She ensures the public trust with her professionalism and high standards of honesty and integrity.”

Above and beyond her regular duties, Barajas is a member of the team working on the Sheriff’s Memorial and is a peer counselor. Those counseling skills were used most recently in the tragic deaths of a pedestrian and a young security guard who were hit by a car near Natividad Medical Center.