

Rancho Campana High School unveils performing arts center in Camarillo



JOE LUMAYA/SPECIAL TO THE STAR Guests arrive for the grand opening of the Rancho Campana High School performing arts center Thursday in Camarillo.

When lead singer Gianna Tartisel took the stage with bandmates Jake Needham and Sam Kristofferson on Thursday night at the Rancho Campana High School Performing Arts Center in Camarillo, it dawned on her that they were making history. "We can say that we were the first to perform here and that will never change. It's so cool," said Gianna, 14, a ninth-grader at the school.

Their band, Loose Change, was one of several student acts that performed during a gala celebrating the opening of the arts center, the centerpiece of the Oxnard Union District high school that opened in 2015. The 27,500-square-foot center on the 28-acre campus is the city's first large-scale indoor performance venue for concerts and plays.

The \$20 million center is also the centerpiece of the high school, which offers arts and entertainment as one area of focus. Completion of the arts center marks the end of construction and the beginning of the full use of the facility at the high school, said Rancho Campana Principal Roger Adams. "There really wouldn't be a more appropriate way to start this than to say, wow, isn't this amazing?" Adams said to the cheers of the crowd that packed the 700-seat center Thursday.

Adams said the gala, which also featured performances by Camarillo High School and Rio Mesa High School students, was a way to give the public a preview of the center and how it will be used to showcase community talent. "Amazing memories will be created in this place and that's going to start tonight," said Adams. "It's a wonderful community asset. The high school district really did spend a lot of quality effort in making this just a premiere site for everybody to enjoy," said Camarillo City Manager Dave Norman.

"It's so beautiful and I honestly can't even fathom it yet," said student Darcy O'Toole, who performed a song she wrote. "I can't wait for all the memories that will be created here."