

Ground broken for new school

The Willow Grove community will soon get a new arts school.

The board and staff of Philadelphia-based Settlement Music School broke ground Friday on a new school to be built on Davisville Road in Upper Moreland. The school, which will have a 320-seat recital hall available for use by other nonprofit arts and civic organizations, is expected to open September 2009.

Settlement Music School is a nonprofit community arts school with five branches in the Philadelphia area — including one in Jenkintown that will close when the Upper Moreland school opens — and one branch in Camden, N.J.

Its six branches make it the largest community arts school in the United States, according to executive director Bob Capanna.

"It is a pretty large, pretty vibrant organization," he said.

Capanna said the Settlement Music School board has been looking for a way to offer more services to the Eastern Montgomery County community, but couldn't because its



Shovels and hard hats are ready for the ceremonial dig Friday morning as the Settlement Music School broke ground on its new Willow Grove Branch on Davisville Road in Upper Moreland. Occupancy is anticipated for September 2009.

DAVID GARRETT / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Jenkintown school was too small.

"It is the only one of the six locations we do not own, and consequently, we couldn't make the improvements we would normally make," Capanna said.

So the board decided instead to buy property near the train station in Willow Grove.

About 800 students attend classes at the Jenkintown school, and Capanna anticipates being able to accommodate them and 700 more at the new Upper Moreland school. The school

will be a 25,000-square-foot, three-story building with 29 studios for individual and group music and dance classes.

At the groundbreaking for the new school, Settlement Music School Central Board Chairman Joseph Waz Jr. announced the school's \$25 million capital campaign.

The school has already raised \$18.5 million, including a \$3 million Pennsylvania Economic Development grant.

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