

**For Immediate Release**  
**Photo available upon request**

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**t. howard + associates Wins Arizona Governor's Achievement Award for Innovative School Design**

*Catalina Foothills Valley View Early Learning Center awarded prize in 'Personalized Learning Spaces' category*

**Dallas, Texas, March 1, 2009** – Dallas architecture firm **t. howard + associates** (THA), has been named the winner of a 2008 Governor's Achievement Award for Innovative School Design by Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano. Announced prior to Governor Napolitano's taking office as the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security, the award recognizes the community-centered approach of THA's Early Childhood Studio in addressing diverse learning needs at the recently opened Catalina Foothills Valley View Early Learning Center (ELC), which is located at 3435 E. Sunrise Drive in Tucson, Arizona.

The award, in the Personalized Learning Spaces category, was presented in a special ceremony at the Arizona state capital on January 9, 2009. Todd Howard, AIA, LEED AP and Mike Wells, AIA, of t. howard + associates attended the ceremony to receive the award.

"We are honored that our work on the Valley View Early Learning Center has been recognized," said Todd Howard, president of THA. "We are committed to delivering architecture that meets the unique needs of our clients, big and small, in their own communities."

Said Mike Wells, director of THA's Early Childhood Studio, "We are particularly pleased that our partnership with ELC allowed us to incorporate cultural elements in both indoor and outdoor classrooms that enhance learning for children of multiple learning capacities. It is an honor to share this award with the ELC team."

Designed to accommodate up to 120 children from ages 2 ½ to 5, the Catalina Foothills Valley View Early Learning Center includes six classrooms, with provision for future expansion of up to four additional classrooms. The ELC design features enhancements for serving children who

have developmental delays in the areas of cognitive, communication, social or emotional, physical or adaptive skills. Children with special needs are integrated with typically developing children in the regular classrooms at a ratio that reflects every day life.

Some of the Center's unique features include:

- A large, circular multipurpose area recalling the Kiva of regional Native American cultures was designed to accommodate community and parental involvement activities.
- An indoor activity area, *El Pequeno Cañon*, that adjoins and connects all the classrooms along a radical "river canyon" element. Each classroom features a covered outdoor patio area, directly adjacent to the outdoor play area and facing the Catalina Mountains to the north.
- A fenced exterior play area that is surrounded on three sides by undisturbed natural desert areas with mature saguaro cacti. The play area includes tricycle paths, water and sand play, slides, shade and seating areas, site built adobe walls and manufactured play structures for the children, as well as storage, drinking water and access to toilet facilities adjacent to the play area.

Established in 1998, **t. howard + associates (THA)** is an award-winning architecture firm specializing in healthcare, educational, early childhood and ecclesiastical design. Committed to quality, the THA team includes licensed architects and interior designers. In addition to architecture and design, THA offers a multitude of services including pre-development analysis, sustainable building/design consulting and LEED certification. The firm also offers sustainability consulting services and is committed to designing as environmentally sound as possible. More information can be found by calling 214.522.1100 or visiting [www.thaarch.com](http://www.thaarch.com).

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