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# St. Jude's Ranch replaces landmark damaged by weather

**Steel 'beacon' expected to last decades atop home for abused children**



Mona Shield Payne / Special to the Sun

Workers, from left, Randy Wright, Fernando Gonzalez and Felipe Arellano, affix an ornate cross atop a new metal dome as they prepare for its installation Monday on the cathedral tower at St. Jude's Children's Ranch in Boulder City.

**By [Jean Reid Norman](#) ([contact](#))**

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A new dome took its place atop the chapel tower at St. Jude's Ranch for Children in Boulder City on Monday.

Its placement returned the wrought iron cross that was taken down months ago to its former spot.

The 1,200-pound, red dome replaces a mosaic tile one that sat atop the tower for decades holding the ornate cross. Cracks in the tiles allowed water to leak in and damage the wood underneath so badly that

after some high winds last winter, the cross tilted about 20 degrees, Executive Director Christine Spadafor said.

The cross was taken down because of safety concerns, and officials of the home for abused and neglected children weighed their options, Chief Financial Officer Greg Andrews said.

The least expensive option, to go without a dome and cross, was dismissed immediately, Spadafor said.

“It’s more than a dome,” she said. “It’s a beacon, a spiritual landmark. When the children see that, they know they’re home.”

Repairing the original mosaic dome was too expensive, Andrews said, so St. Jude’s decided to come up with a more resilient alternative.

The steel dome was delivered about 9 a.m. Monday to St. Jude’s and its two pieces and the cross were assembled by crews before the crane arrived about noon to lift it to its new home.

“We’re thrilled, ecstatic,” Spadafor said. “It’s so beautiful.”

And weatherproof, said Randy Sims, general manager of Cedco Iron Inc., the company that crafted it.

The ornamental iron maker studied photos of the old dome to craft one that looks similar, he said. A key difference is the new dome has a powder coat of baked-on paint that can handle all kinds of weather — cold, heat and rain.

The cross was in good shape, requiring only a new coat of the weather-resistant paint after the old paint was stripped off, Sims said.

The new dome represents a long-term, sustainable solution, Spadafor said.

“We expect it will last well into this century,” she said.

Now that the Boulder City landmark is back, St. Jude’s has been talking to potential donors to help with the \$30,000 cost, Spadafor said.

She said St. Jude’s officials realize the dome and cross are more than decorations at the home. They are a community landmark.

Andrews said he realized how much of a landmark it was one day when he saw an artist set up at St. Jude’s painting the chapel.

“The dome is part of it,” he said. “It’s a prominent part of our history.”

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