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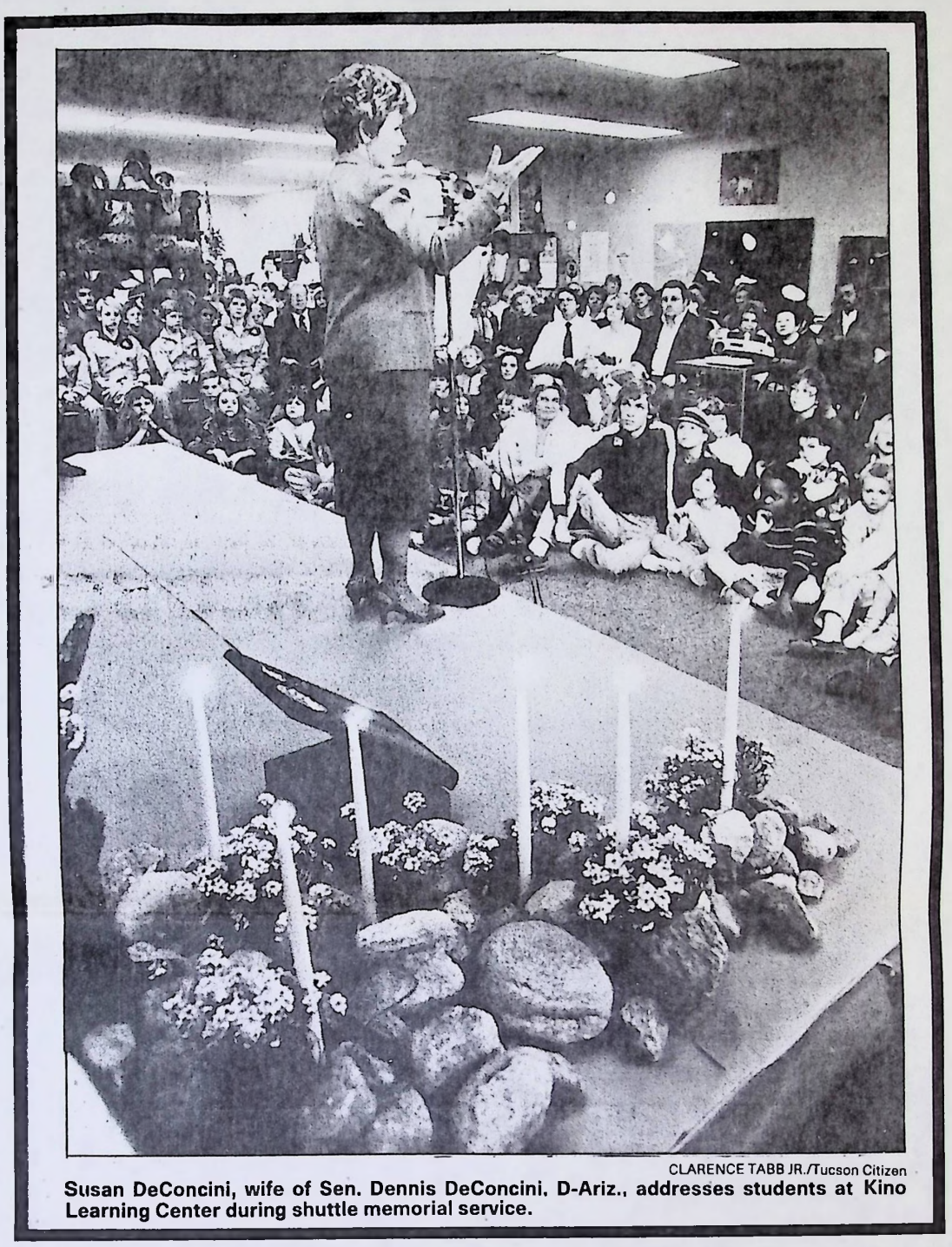

CLARENCE TABB JR./Tucson Citizen

Susan DeConcini, wife of Sen. Dennis DeConcini, D-Ariz., addresses students at Kino Learning Center during shuttle memorial service.

Shuttle tragedy remembered with mock blastoff

By GAIL CIBENER
Citizen Staff Writer

They remembered the tragedy — and then they blasted off.

Students at Kino Learning Center "launched" a mock space shuttle yesterday on the first anniversary of the space shuttle Challenger tragedy.

The program began with prayers, and the lighting of candles for the seven astronauts who died in the shuttle explosion.

Susan DeConcini, wife of Sen. Dennis DeConcini, D-Ariz., explained the work that Kino students and families have done to prepare the mock shuttle and introduced two special guests.

They were Melissa Blackey and Hillary Holloway, students from the Concord, N.H., high school where Christa McAuliffe taught. McAuliffe, who was to be the first teacher in space, was among the seven killed.

The girls had been invited by Kino to take part in the mock mission.

Charles B. Walker, an aeromedical engineer with McDonnell Douglas Corp., described his experiences on three shuttle flights with the help of slides and a videotape.

To the amazed "oohs" and "aahs" of students and parents, Walker showed slides of the Earth as viewed from the shuttle, including full views of a 500-mile-wide hurricane and of Grand Canyon.

Walker also explained how he conducted experiments with zero gravity while a videotape showed the experiments and how the astronauts lived in the weightless state.

He also told "future space travelers" about his hopes for the future of the space program, including an internationally funded space station to be built in eight years.

"Eventually the whole universe will be our home," he said, commending Kino students for their interest in the space program, which he said is only the first step in becoming an astronaut.

Right after the mock shuttle lifted off, Paul N. Hanover of Hughes Aircraft Co. described the state of the space program, discussing the redesigning of the space shuttle, complete with updated computers and escape devices for the astronauts.

Hanover also encouraged students to try to become astronauts. He showed slides of astonauts conducting experiments on a shuttle flight with various toys to see how they worked in zero gravity. Students laughed at a wind-up jumping mouse that leaped into the air and floated around the shuttle instead of landing.

Honorary plaques were given out by Sister Judy Bisignano, the school's director, to those who gave their time and money to create the detailed shuttle model.

The seven student astronauts, including the New Hampshire girls, will remain on the shuttle until 1 p.m. today.



MEMORIAL SERVICE — Hillary Holloway (left) and Melissa Blackey, both 17, and astronaut Charles Walker participated in yesterday's shuttle memorial service at the Kino Learning Center. The girls are from the high school in New Hampshire at which Christa McAuliffe, the first teacher to fly in a shuttle, taught.

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