



**What: Dedication of REACH Ashland Youth Center**

**When: Wednesday May 22, 4 to 6 p.m.**

**Where: REACH Ashland Youth Center, 16335 E. 14<sup>th</sup> St and 163<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, San Leandro**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**A VISION OF LOCAL YOUTH BECOMES REALITY:  
NEW ASHLAND YOUTH CENTER OPENS IN ALAMEDA COUNTY**

On Wednesday, May 22, Alameda County will host a special dedication ceremony to celebrate the opening of the new REACH Ashland Youth Center, a \$23 million redevelopment project that will provide a wide variety of youth-oriented programs including job training, educational assistance, art and cultural programs, recreation, and health and wellness services.

The REACH Ashland Youth Center – believed to be the largest facility of its kind in the country - is the fruit of a decade-long effort led by local youth who mobilized because they felt Ashland, a gritty urban enclave between San Leandro and Castro Valley, lacked adequate recreational opportunities and services for youth in a community struggling with problems including gang violence and some of Alameda County’s highest school dropout and teen pregnancy rates.

This grassroots effort has resulted in a dynamic, 31,500-square-foot marvel of green architecture that includes a community health clinic, library, day care facility, multi-media room, dance studio, weight room, arts room and a café. The Youth Center, which provides all services to youth free of charge, is managed by the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency and is operated in conjunction with numerous community partners including La Clinica de la Raza, the San Lorenzo Unified School District, the Hayward Area Recreation and Park District, the Alameda County Library and the Alameda County Deputy Sheriffs’ Activities League.

“The focus is on youth, but this facility really is a beacon of hope for the entire Ashland community,” said Alameda County Supervisor Nate Miley, whose efforts in collaboration with the youth of Ashland were critical in seeing the project to completion. “It has the power to transform the lives of young people who until now have had little or no access to the many opportunities and services that are available here.”

Participating in the Dedication and providing tours of the new facility will be several local youth who led the campaign for a Youth Center in Ashland. Not only did this effort garner strong support from the community at large, but local youth have continued to work side by side with County staff and design consultants to help guide both the program development and actual physical design of the building. For Dominique Parras, 19, the official opening of the newly completed center this week, “still seems like a dream.” Dominique, who at age 8 began attending community meetings and otherwise advocating for the Youth Center, was speaking at the facility one afternoon this week as activity buzzed around her - a Hip-Hop Dance class in one area, a quilt-making project in an art studio across the way and an exercise class in the Youth Center’s fully equipped weight room. “It is great to see all the people here, to see that the youth of Ashland have finally got the place they have always needed.”

The Youth Center was the catalyst of a string of redevelopment projects that have transformed a once-tired stretch of East 14<sup>th</sup> Street, bringing swaths of greenery, new architecture and heavy foot traffic to the heart of a community that for years lacked a central gathering space. The Center is the centerpiece of a new youth complex that includes the

newly constructed Jack Holland Sr. Park and the new open multi-use gymnasium at Edendale Middle School. The Holland Park brings much needed outdoor recreational park space to Ashland, while the Edendale Gymnasium will be utilized for middle school athletics as well as after-school activities operated jointly by the San Lorenzo Unified School District, Hayward Area Recreation and Park District, and the Alameda County Deputy Sheriffs' Activities League.

The Ashland Youth Center also is in keeping with the commitment to sustainability that has earned Alameda County national attention. With a multitude of environmentally friendly features, including an array of rooftop solar panels that currently generate about 20 percent of the building's power, the Youth Center is expected to become the first County building to receive the coveted LEED Platinum designation established by the US Green Building Council.

"A lot of groups and individuals have come together to make this project happen," said Pedro Naranjo, the Center's Executive Director. "We are in the process of accomplishing something very special."

Added Alex Briscoe, Director of the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency: "This is the type of project that will restore faith in government in America, which will show how to improve the social circumstances and the life outcomes of communities by honoring their words and their vision.... We're going to look back in 20 years and see a community transformed by the positive wisdom and intelligence of youth."

## **Core Programs of the Ashland Youth Center**

### **RECREATION**

A recreation and fitness program led by the Alameda County Deputy Sheriffs' Activities League encourages physical health and supports young people in developing healthy coping strategies that will ease the way to becoming positive, safe and productive adults. Classes such as dance, martial arts, weight training, boxing, basketball, soccer and more will be offered in the weight room, dance studio and gymnasium.

### **EDUCATION**

The San Lorenzo Unified School District will lead programs including tutoring, online credit recovery, internship preparation and placement, career and college preparation, restorative justice seminars and parent education.

### **ARTS & CULTURE**

The Alameda County Arts Commission will lead programs in Visual Arts such as painting, drawing, sculpture and mixed media; Performing Arts such as dance, theater and music; and Digital Arts such as photography, graphic design, video and music production. All instruction aims to help youth develop life skills such as group collaboration, problem solving and positive decision making.

### **CAREER DEVELOPMENT & EMPLOYMENT**

The Alameda County Social Services Agency and select community partners will provide Career Development and Employment programs and services. These activities will focus on college and career preparation, employment services along with internship, mentorship, and leadership development opportunities.

### **HEALTH & WELLNESS**

A focus on health and wellness is embedded across all service areas, with a collaborative multi-agency team available to help youth with many needs and concerns. Inside the Center is the Fuente Wellness Center, operated by La Clínica de la Raza, which provides primary medical services, individual and community health education services, dental services and behavioral health services through an integrated services model. Health & Wellness services will include a mentorship/education/career pathway for youth exploring careers in the field.