

# CONTRA COSTA TIMES

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## **OUR NEIGHBORS: CHRIS TREADWAY**

Call goes out for coats, toys for needy

IT WASN'T QUITE A YEAR AGO that this space relayed Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia's appeal for donations of coats and toys to be given to students at Verde Elementary School in North Richmond. Readers responded generously, particularly with the call for coats that would help keep youngsters warm in one of the neediest areas of the county.

It's again time for the Verde Holiday Drive. Gioia's office is again appealing for help in collecting more than 300 toys and 100 warm coats that will be given out by Santa Claus at the school Dec. 22.

"We are in desperate need of coats and toys and monetary donations," said Luz Gomez, district coordinator for Gioia's office. "These kids warm and break your heart at the same time. They live in one of the poorest neighborhoods in the Bay Area, and they're just wonderful kids. Many probably wouldn't get a toy without this."

This is the seventh year the holiday drive has been held to bring some holiday warmth and cheer to students in North Richmond, where the median income is below \$23,000 a year, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

This year's drive, sponsored by the North Richmond Task Force, the city of Richmond and Gioia's office, has about half the donations needed.

Toys and new coats can be dropped off at Gioia's office, 11780 San Pablo Ave., Suite D, in El Cerrito, one block north of the El Cerrito Del Norte BART station.

Cash or check donations and gently used coats also are welcome. All donations must be received by noon Dec. 18. Checks should be made payable to The North Richmond Neighborhood House c/o 2006 Verde Toy and Coat Drive.

Have a community item or a tip, some trivia, an old photo, a leaky hydrant? Call Chris Treadway at 510-262-2784,