

# Supervisor John Gioia's Weekly eUpdate

April 2, 2010

## Why after school matters – keeping youth on track and out of trouble

As working parents, my wife and I are well aware of the practical necessity of having good, reliable after school programs available for our children. But after school programs do so much more for kids and families than just offer child care.

A new report by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids (a coalition of law enforcement leaders and crime victims) points out that after school programs in California have proved to reduce juvenile crime, boost academic learning, and help kids graduate from high school on time.

California actually leads the nation in funding for after school programs, spending \$550 million annually for programs targeted to schools in low-income communities. Contra Costa County has worked hard, in partnership with school districts, to make sure we receive our fair share of this investment. In 2002, I started the Board of Supervisors' Afterschool4All Initiative which contributed County dollars towards the required matching funds for state after school grants, and since that time we have supported numerous applications for state and federal after school grants.

This local investment of time and resources has paid off. The County's commitment has helped bring in more than \$10 million in after school grants to West Contra Costa, creating after school programs for more than 2,000 elementary, middle and high school students.

Some of our local schools that have been able to expand after school programs as a result of our efforts include: Richmond, Kennedy and El Cerrito High Schools; LaVonya DeJean and Helms Middle Schools; and Verde, Peres, Coronado, Grant, Washington, Stege, Riverside, King, and Montalvin Elementary Schools.

According to the report by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, despite California's substantial investment in after school programs, there is still a huge amount of unmet need. In fact more than half of our publicly funded after school programs have waiting lists.

To address this unmet need, I led the development of two new youth centers in Richmond -- the RYSE Youth Center in Central Richmond and the Young Adult Empowerment Center in North Richmond. The County is investing in these centers because we know that providing young people with positive activities during the hours they are not in school saves us money in law enforcement, and gives our youth the opportunities they need and deserve. We've been able to do this by using our modest investment to leverage other public and private dollars, and we will continue to prioritize investments in our county's young people.

In these tight budget times, we must continue to support meaningful after school opportunities for our youth. You can help! Please join me at "Be a Kid Night" on the evening of Saturday, April 24 at the RYSE Youth Center. This fundraiser for RYSE will be fun and support a great program. For more information, contact Terrance Cheung at [terrance.cheung@bos.cccounty.us](mailto:terrance.cheung@bos.cccounty.us).