

West County Newsletter

MAY 2009

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A message from Supervisor John Gioia



This is the time of year when many parents fret about summer activities for

their kids – school is out soon! For working families, like my own, coming up with fun, interesting and affordable activities is challenging. Summer scheduling feels like a full-time job.

Unfortunately, summer camps and programs can be pricy, and some great places are beyond the budget of many families. The good news is that even in a down economy, quality affordable summer programming can be found.

Our local cities offer some great recreational programs, the County and the City of Richmond have summer job programs for youth, and local non-profits have an array of programming available.

Many of the more expensive summer programs offer scholarships or a sliding fee scale based on need. It never hurts to ask.

To find out about local programs, check the West Contra Costa Unified School District's summer resource guide. A copy will soon be available on the District's website at: www.wccusd.k12.ca.us or call the District at 510-231-1100.

I'm a big fan of summer youth programs.

Not only is this a necessity for working parents who can't stay home with their kids, but research shows children experience learning losses when they're not exposed to engaging summer activities.

Studies suggest that more than half of the achievement gap between lower and higher income youth is due to unequal access to

summer learning opportunities. Also, many children, especially those at high risk of obesity, gain weight more rapidly in the summer than during the school year because they're not involved in regular, active play.

There's lots of work to be done to create more affordable summer activities for children of all income backgrounds. I encourage all parents to take advantage of what's out there. And believe me, I can relate to the planning work this takes. It's an investment well spent – for the growing minds and bodies of our kids.

Have a safe and healthy summer!

- John Gioia

“The goals of the program are to promote nutrition, improve access to fresh produce, and support local agriculture.”

Fresh, Local Produce For West County Residents

A new program offers Richmond area residents boxes of fresh, locally grown produce, delivered to several pick-up spots in West County.

Customers of “Richmond Farm 2 Table,” can pick up two boxes of seasonal fruits and vegetables per month grown here in Contra Costa County. Recipes and a monthly health and nutrition newsletter are also included.

The farm boxes are part of the “Buy Fresh, Buy Local” initiative introduced by Supervisors John Gioia and Mary Piepho last year to

promote county-grown produce, including helping urban residents enjoy the bounty of local farms. The cost of each box is \$25. Under a unique pricing plan, paying members help subsidize the program for families who cannot afford the full amount.

Pick-up sites include:
 * **Supervisor Gioia's office, 11780 San Pablo Avenue, Suite D, El Cerrito**
 * **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center, 360 Harbor Way, Richmond.**
 * **Richmond Children's Foundation, 125 Park Place, #230, Richmond.**

The goals of the program are to promote nutrition, improve access to fresh produce, and support local agriculture.

This program was cooperatively developed by Supervisor Gioia's office, the Richmond Children's Foundation, and the Brentwood Agricultural Land Trust.

For more information, including on becoming a member, contact Richmond Farm 2 Table at 510-234-1200 or Luz Gomez in Supervisor Gioia's office at 510-374-3231.

H1N1 (Swine) Flu: Facts & Resources

The outbreak of H1N1 (swine) flu is naturally concerning. It helps to sort fact from fiction.

The Contra Costa County Health Department is closely monitoring the illness, working with state and federal agencies. The Department's website is regularly updated with flu information. Check: www.cchealth.org

Swine flu is a strain of influenza or common flu that typically effects pigs. It passes to humans, though this is historically rare. Once affecting humans, the flu changes or mutates. The current strain is being studied by health officials to learn best how to treat and prevent it. Like all influenzas, it's contagious.

H1N1 is spread by contact with the mucous or saliva of an infected person. You can't catch it by eating pork or pig products.

The current strain affects people differently. So far, most cases in the United States are mild.

The best way to avoid getting the flu is to wash your hands and face regularly; and to avoid contact with infected people. To help prevent the spread of the flu, cover your mouth and nose with the inside of the elbow when sneezing or coughing. If you have symptoms, or have been diagnosed with the flu, it's important to stay home, rest, and avoid close contact with others.

If you or anyone in your family gets flu symptoms, see your health care provider. Symptoms include: fever, cough, body aches, chills, sore throat, fatigue, and vomiting or diarrhea. If you don't have a doctor, contact the **Contra Costa Health Services Advice Nurse Line at 1-877-661-6230.**

A health care provider can test your blood to see if you have the flu, and provide advice on care. Swine flu is treated with prescription medications you get through your healthcare provider.

For more information: County Health Department: www.cchealth.org or 1-888-959-9911

Unique Approach to Improving African American Health

History is the guiding light of a major Bay Area effort to improve the health of African Americans.

Two hundred years ago, Harriet Tubman, as a "conductor" for the Underground Railroad, helped smuggle slaves to freedom in the north. Today, hundreds of "health conductors" are being trained throughout the Bay Area to guide fellow African Americans to better health.

This includes roughly 50 "conductors" in West Contra Costa, including Joan Carpenter, a District Coordinator for Supervisor Gioia.

Launched in 2004, the African American Health Conductor program is sponsored by the Bay Area African American Health Initiative, a public-private partnership funded by grants and donations.

The program was developed to address the alarming disparities between the health outcomes of African Americans and people of other races. In Contra Costa County, echoing national trends, African Americans are at higher risk for serious problems from cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes than others with these conditions.

Health conductors receive extensive training in disease

and illness prevention. They spread their knowledge to others via grassroots community-based communication. Conductors also commit to personal health goals; and are considered role models.

The conductor health education focus is on developing and maintaining healthy lifestyle habits.

The program's goal is to train 4,650 volunteer conductors.

For more information, contact Joan Carpenter in Supervisor Gioia's Office at 510-374-3231.

"History is the guiding light of a major Bay Area effort to improve the health of African Americans."

Going Solar with Your Home

Many homeowners want to go solar but can't afford the high upfront costs. A program being developed by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) hopes to help. As a board member of ABAG, Supervisor Gioia is working hard on the plan.

The aim is to make energy efficiency more affordable for residents and business owners by spreading initial costs over years, similar to paying off a loan.

This approach is already proving successful in programs run by a few California cities including Berkeley and Palm Desert. Homeowner interest in these programs is huge.

ABAG's program would allow Bay Area residents to convert their homes to solar energy, make energy reducing improvements, then pay for the upgrades incrementally with their property tax over 20 years.

While still in the development stage, ABAG hopes to unveil a plan next year.

For more information contact Kate Rauch in Supervisor Gioia's office at 510-374-3231.

Federal Grant Helps County Homeless

In a time when many people have lost their homes, or are teetering on the edge, a recent federal grant to help prevent homelessness in Contra Costa County was enthusiastically welcomed by residents, housing advocates, and public officials, including Supervisor Gioia.

About \$1.4 million of federal stimulus money was awarded in March to the County's Homeless Program. The City of Richmond received almost \$600,000.

The stimulus money is aimed at helping people keep their homes, or at quick "rehousing" of the newly homeless. In awarding the money, Phil Mangano, Head of

the White House Office on Homelessness, recognized Contra Costa County for its collaboration with cities.

For more information contact the Contra Costa County Homeless Program at 925-313-6736.

Emergency Alerts Via Cell Phone

Your cell phone can now alert you to emergencies such as chemical spills, industrial accidents or natural disasters thanks to a new program by the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Department.

The "cell phone alert" program is part of the county's Community Warning System, which uses sirens, radio, TV, and targeted phone calls to alert residents of emergencies and hazards.

The Warning System, which also sends alerts via landlines, is run by the Sheriff's office.

To activate your cell phone, simply go to the Warning System's web site: <http://cws.cccounty.us>, and follow instructions. Or call the Warning System Administrator at 925-313-9622.

Breakfasts With John

Supervisor Gioia continues his community breakfasts around West County.

These events are a great opportunity to sit down and talk informally with the Supervisor and his guests about issues. Breakfasts are held at rotating restaurants, cafes, and community locations. No purchase is required.

The next Breakfast With John:

When: Saturday, May 16, 8:30 to 10 am

Where: Crescent Park Family Center, 5000 Hartnett in Richmond.

For more information: Supervisor Gioia's Office at 510-374-2131.

This event is cosponsored by the East Bay Housing Organization (EBHO), in conjunction with Affordable Housing Week.

For upcoming Breakfasts check Supervisor Gioia's website:

www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/depart/dis1

Funding to Help Make Richmond a Healthier Community

The California Endowment (TCE), a private, statewide health foundation, has selected Richmond's Iron Triangle and North Richmond as one of 14 California communities to receive millions of dollars over the next ten years to improve health among children, their families, and men and boys of color.

Starting this June, TCE will provide assistance to lead a nine-month community planning and engagement process to gather information from residents and stakeholders about reaching TCE's health goals. That information will help guide TCE on its longer-term Richmond investment.

The community-led planning initiative includes the creation of a Steering Committee that will include participation from our office, the Richmond City Manager's office, the school district, residents, community organizations, and service providers.

The Endowment defines health broadly, including improving air quality, street safety, access to healthcare, and access to education, as well as personal health. The overall planning for the effort is being made by a collaboration of organizations, community groups, government agencies, and public officials.

The Endowment chose the 14 communities after years of research. They were selected based on need. The goal is to have a significant and lasting positive impact on the lives of children.

For more information, contact Terrance Cheung in Supervisor Gioia's Office at 510-374-3231, or check the Building Healthy Communities page on The California Endowment's Website at www.calendow.org.

Information about Richmond's effort is also at www.healthyrichmond.net

Picture This!



Supervisor Gioia and his family support a proposed state law prohibiting homeowners associations from requiring traditional irrigated lawns and instead allowing homeowners to use drought-resistant landscaping.

Supervisor Gioia hosted one of his regular community breakfasts at the George Miller III Children's Center (a County-run Head Start preschool) in April.



Community Cleanups like these along Wildcat Creek in North Richmond (left) and Appian Creek in El Sobrante (below) occurred around West County for Earth Day, April 25.



Office Staff

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East Richmond Heights Liaison

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Office Hours: Monday – Friday

8:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon

1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Our Website:

www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/depart/dis

Other Elected Officials

House of Representatives:

Congressman George Miller, III

(District 7)

(510) 262-6500 - Richmond Office

(925) 602-1880 - District Office

Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher

(District 10)

(925) 932-8899 or

(925) 757-7187 - District Offices

State Senate & Assembly:

Senator Mark DeSalunier

(District 7)

(925) 602-6593 – District Office

Senator Loni Hancock

(District 9)

(510) 286-1333 - District Office

Assemblywoman Nancy Skinner

(District 14)

(510) 559-1406 - District Office

Assemblyman Tom Torlakson

(District 11)

(925) 372-7990 - District Office

Commission & Volunteer Opportunities

Interested in community issues? Want to get involved? The County has numerous citizen boards that advise the Supervisors on a range of issues. For a complete list of openings check the county's website at www.co.contra-costa.ca.us. Click on Board Advisory Body Information. Applications are available online, or through our office. There are current openings on:

Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board,

Fatima Matal Sol - 925-313-6311

El Sobrante R-9 Committee

Terrance Cheung - 510-374-3231

Montalvin Manor Redevelopment Advisory Committee

Luz Gomez - 510-374-3231

Mental Health Commission

Karen Shuler - 925-313-4310

North Richmond Municipal Advisory Council

Luz Gomez - 510-374-3231

Youth Commission

Joan Tomasini - 925-646-5940.

Regular Public Meetings

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Meets at 9:30 am every Tuesday at the County Administration Building, 651 Pine St, in Martinez.

El Cerrito City Council

Meets at 7 pm on the first and third Mondays of every month at the El Cerrito City Hall, 10890 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito

El Sobrante Municipal Advisory Council

Meets at 7 pm on the second Wednesday of every month at the El Sobrante Library, 4191 Appian Way, off San Pablo Dam Road.

Kensington Municipal Advisory Council

Meets at 7 pm the last Tuesday of every month at the Kensington Community Center, 59 Arlington, in Kensington.

Montalvin Manor Redevelopment Advisory Committee

Meet at 6:30 pm on the second Thursday of every month at the Montalvin Elementary School on Christine Drive.

North Richmond Municipal Advisory Council

Meets at 5 pm the second Tuesday of every month at 515 Silver Avenue in North Richmond

Richmond City Council

Meets at 7 pm every first and third Tuesday at Richmond City Hall, 1401 Marina Way South, Richmond

San Pablo City Council

Meets at 7 pm on the first and third Mondays of every month at City Hall, 13831 San Pablo Avenue, Maple Hall, Building Two, San Pablo.