

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

West Contra Costa Family Justice Center breaks ground at new Richmond location



Lt. Governor Gavin Newsom joins city, county and state leaders for the groundbreaking ceremony at the site of the expanded Family Justice Center in Richmond, Calif., on Friday, Nov. 1, 2013. The multi-service center will be for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse and human trafficking and their families. (Laura A. Oda/Bay Area News Group)



Contra Costa County supervisor John Gioia, left, scoops up a ceremonial pile of dirt along with other local and state elected officials at the groundbreaking ceremony for the future expanded Family Justice Center in Richmond, Calif., on Friday, Nov. 1, 2013. The multi-service center will be for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse and human trafficking and their families. (Laura A. Oda/Bay Area News Group)

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RICHMOND -- Construction has begun on the future home of the West Contra Costa Family Justice Center, a haven for victims of domestic and sexual violence that officials hope will serve as a national model for violence prevention.

"Even if you don't want to talk to police -- not everyone is ready to prosecute -- you can come and get services. It's going to be a family-friendly place where a mom can get services while kids play in a safe environment," said Richmond police Chief Chris Magnus. He was among the local, county and state dignitaries and community stakeholders who celebrated Friday at a groundbreaking ceremony for the project 10 years in the making.

The center is a joint effort by numerous public, private and nonprofit agencies to provide aid to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse, child abuse and human trafficking and their families. The goal: break the cycle of violence at home to make the community safer by giving people easy access to services in a single location. Plans are in the works for similar centers in Central and East Contra Costa County.

"This is truly an astounding project and one that communities across the nation will look to for guidance on how to successfully stop violence where it starts," said John Gioia, the county supervisor who represents Richmond.

Since the center opened with an interim location within the Richmond Police Department's Hilltop mall substation in 2011, it has served more than 500 West County families.

The expanded center is expected to open in fall 2014 in a 7,200-square-foot facility at 256 24th St., walking distance from the Richmond BART station and civic center. There, people will be able to meet with police, counselors and attorneys, obtain emergency shelter and safe housing, and get job-placement help.

The building, a long-shuttered mental health patient intake center, was donated to the city by Contra Costa County and is being renovated through foundation and government grants, bond money and private and corporate donations.

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The \$2.75 million project to open the expanded center is funded, but the fundraising efforts are far from over as more money will be needed to support operations, Magnus said.

Learn more about the West Contra Costa Family Justice Center at www.wccfjc.org or by calling 510-965-4937.

Contact Malaika Fraley at 925-234-1684. Follow her at [Twitter.com/malaikafraley](https://twitter.com/malaikafraley).

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