

**INSIDE
THIS
ISSUE:**

John's Message 1

Healthcare Reform Legislation is Up and Running

North Richmond Senior Center Saved from Closure

Doctors Medical Center Facing Critical Fiscal Challenge

Getting S.E.R.I.O.U.S about Ants

Construction Begins on West County Family Justice Center

RYSE Youth Center Turns 5!

Downtown El Sobrante Improvements

Supervisor Gioia Elected to Lead State Association of Counties

Back Page 6

West County Newsletter

DECEMBER 2013



A message from Supervisor John Gioia

I wish everyone a happy and healthy holiday season! This is a thoughtful time of the year, as I reflect upon my own work and life.

Some major events

happened this year – both worldwide and for me, personally.

The 50th anniversary of the untimely assassination of President Kennedy and the death of Nelson Mandela make me think about the importance of leadership and seizing the opportunities presented to us to bring about positive change in our community.

I am finishing my 15th year on the Board of Supervisors and 25 years in elected public office. I learn something new every day from colleagues and constituents which enables me to continually develop fresh ideas, as we work together to solve our most serious problems.

I've taken on new challenges and new leadership roles to expand the reach and impact of my work.

This year, I was selected by county supervisors statewide to serve as President of the California State Association of Counties. Through this role, I influence federal and state policies to enable counties to better serve the vital needs of our residents.

I was appointed by Governor Brown to serve on the California Air Resources Board where I help shape statewide policies to improve air quality and public health, addressing climate change and moving us towards a more sustainable energy future with reduced greenhouse gas emissions and pollution.

Much of my work revolves around reducing health and income disparities. This is why I agreed to work with United Way and actively co-chair a major collaborative effort to cut Bay Area poverty in half by 2020.

While these new leadership roles are exciting opportunities, I get the most personal satisfaction from working on local projects that improve life for our county's residents.

For example, this year we're celebrating the 5 year anniversary of the RYSE Youth Center in Richmond, which I helped found, and it makes me feel proud that over a thousand young people are getting greater opportunities to be successful in their lives.

I'm currently working with Urban Tilth, a local non-profit, to transform vacant land in North Richmond and create a community-led Urban Agriculture Park to help young people learn to eat and live healthier.

Among my biggest challenges for 2014 will be our fight to save Doctors Medical Center – West County's largest emergency room and hospital. After helping bring our community hospital out of bankruptcy in 2007, I am committed to exploring every opportunity to save this vital health facility now facing its most dire challenges yet.

Despite our challenges, we live in a wonderful community where our great spirit is demonstrated all the time. One example of this is the overwhelming response we've received over the past 15 years to insure that every child of North Richmond's Verde Elementary School gets a free toy and coat during the holidays.

I feel fortunate and honored to represent the community I grew up in; a place which values progressive leadership in improving the lives of all its residents and creating a more fair, just society for everyone.

Thank you West County for allowing me to serve you!

- John

Healthcare Reform Legislation is Up and Running

"...all residents must have health coverage, and that coverage cannot be denied based on income or preexisting conditions."

President Obama's healthcare reform legislation, called the Affordable Care Act (ACA), has taken effect and thousands of people are enrolling in new health care plans, including here in Contra Costa County.

Many resources are available to help consumers choose the right plan for them.

In brief, the law states that all residents must have health coverage, and that coverage cannot be denied based on income or preexisting conditions.

Here in California, the ACA is being administered by Covered California, a state-run health care exchange.

There are currently five medical plans offered under the ACA in Contra Costa County, and Covered California staff will help people find a plan that meets their needs and income. One of these is Contra Costa County's own health plan.

You can reach Covered-California staff through its website at www.coveredca.com or over the phone (1-888-975-1142). One of the Covered-California call centers is in Concord, and run by the County.

Medi-Cal, the state's existing health care plan for low-income residents, expanded under the ACA to accommodate more people.

Covered California staff will help determine your eligibility for Medi-Cal.

If you're not Medi-Cal eligible, you may still qualify for financial help or credits to help pay for health coverage.

The ACA doesn't cover undocumented adult immigrants, but will cover their children. Community clinics also provide care for immigrants.

To learn more, visit the Covered California website at www.coveredca.com, or by phone at 1-800-300-1506

North Richmond Senior Center Saved from Closure

The beloved, much needed and appreciated North Richmond Senior Center was saved from closure by Supervisor Gioia, Congressman George Miller and other political and community leaders, ensuring a continuation of service to the community.

The North Richmond Senior Center faced bank foreclosure after nearly 30 years of serving the community with social, recreational, educational and civic activities.

To save the center, building ownership was transferred to the non-profit Community Housing Development Corporation (CHDC), from the financially-strapped Neighborhood House of North Richmond.

Neighborhood House will continue to run the popular program.

Supervisor Gioia sought and received approval from the Board of Supervisors to use County Park Dedication funds to help CHDC buy the building out of foreclosure.

The special funds can be used to meet local park and recreation needs, including senior and community centers.

For more information contact Luz Gomez at 510-231-8689.

Doctors Medical Center Facing Critical Fiscal Challenge

Doctors Medical Center is facing an uncertain future, with revenue reductions from declining Medicare reimbursement rates, lower patient volume, and a decline in financial support from the state.

The San Pablo hospital will have to increase revenue or affiliate with another healthcare entity if it is to continue to stay open to provide vital medical services to local residents.

Doctors is a public community hospital that's owned and operated by the West Contra Costa Healthcare District. It is West County's largest emergency room and the only one in the area specially certified for treating heart attack and stroke patients. It provides roughly 80% of the inpatient care, and nearly 60% of the emergency care in West County.

Supervisor Gioia, who serves on the Doctors governing board, has long been a leader in helping the hospital establish sustainable finances, and avoid closure. He joined the governing board soon after the hospital filed for bankruptcy in 2006 and helped lead the effort to bring it out of bankruptcy.

Doctors has strived to maintain quality service even after making significant expenditure reductions. By focusing on increasing efficiency, Doctors' per patient costs are 24% lower than the average for East Bay hospitals.

A recent study by Contra Costa County Health Services concluded that the closure of Doctors would result in a local healthcare crisis, with significantly longer lines at other emergency rooms like Kaiser Richmond and Alta Bates, and longer ambulance transport times to those hospitals.

The hospital's current financial pressures are significant. It needs approximately \$15 million to stay open until early 2015, a critical bridge to allow more time for long-term solutions.

Supervisor Gioia and other members of the hospital's leadership team are committed to exploring all options for keeping Doctors Medical Center open. They have been working intensely in exploring partnerships with other healthcare institutions and identifying opportunities for additional revenue.

"The hospital's current financial pressures are significant. It needs \$15 million to stay open until early 2015..."

Getting S.E.R.I.O.U.S about Ants

You might be noticing a few more ants inside buildings as the weather gets colder. In my office, we've been dealing with a recent surge of ants. The ants are inside because they're looking for warmer places to find food.

Before reaching for a can of pesticide, which can affect children and pets and often pollute our waterways, there's a greener, safer way to control the pesky bugs, while also protecting the environment.

Check out this new website developed by public agencies and ant experts that offers effective and non-toxic ways to keep ants out.

Next time you see ants, visit the Got Ants? Get S.E.R.I.O.U.S website at www.gotantsgetserious.org and follow these steps:

- S. Spot** where ants are coming in.
- E. Eliminate** crumbs, messes, and spills.
- R. Rinse** with soap and water.
- I. Isolate** food and water sources.
- O. Obstruct** entryways and seal cracks.
- U. Use baits** if ants don't go away.
- S. Stick to it** to keep ants away!

Our office is following the website's recommendation and we seem to be getting the upper hand on the ants.

Construction Begins on West County Family Justice Center's Permanent Home

"Support is offered for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse, child abuse and human trafficking"

Construction is under way on the West Contra Costa Family Justice Center's new, permanent Richmond home at 256 - 24th Street.

The center, which has been operating out of temporary headquarters at Hilltop Mall since 2011, is a unique one-stop service center for victims of domestic and sexual violence, as well as victims of child and elder abuse.

The new site is expected to open in the summer or fall of 2014.

Offering a multitude of services under one roof makes it easier for victims to get needed assistance. People visiting the center can get help from attorneys, police, counselors, housing, health and employment specialists, and others. Support is offered for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse, child abuse and human trafficking.

Supervisor Gioia joined a committed partnership of public, private, and nonprofit groups working together to build the center.

He led the effort to donate a former County owned building to the City of Richmond to house the new center.



(Above) Supervisor Gioia with Board of Supervisors and Lt. Gov. Newsome.

To learn more about the family justice center model visit the [Family Justice Center Alliance](#).

California Lt. Governor Gavin Newsome attended a groundbreaking of the project, along with numerous other local officials and community leaders.

For more on the West County Center, contact Terrance Cheung in Supervisor Gioia's office at 510-231-8688.

RYSE Youth Center Turns 5! Half a decade of serving Richmond youth, going strong

The RYSE Youth Center in Richmond is celebrating its 5 year anniversary.

Supervisor Gioia, founder of the RYSE Center, is proud of the leadership of its young people in the center's development and operation. The vision for a new youth center in Richmond grew out of the needs articulated by youth after the tragic killing of four high school students in 2000. Young people expressed a need for positive youth activities and after school programming.

A safe, creative and enriching home-away-from home to over a thousand young people, RYSE offers an array of activities covering leadership development, academic and career preparation,

health and well-being, arts and culture, and a state of the art media arts studio.

It operates in partnership with many other youth service providers.



(Above) Supervisor Gioia at the RYSE Toy Giveaway & Anniversary Celebration.

Supervisor Gioia, who serves on the RYSE Board, commends the center's success as a unique and much-needed resource for Richmond young people. He looks forward to helping it expand to serve even more local youth.

Take a look at this impactful music video created by RYSE youth called RYSE Up.

For more see the RYSE website, email (info@rysecenter.com) or call 510-374-3401.

Downtown El Sobrante Improvements

Plans are in the works to add mini street parks called "parklets" to El Sobrante's San Pablo Dam Road, as part of a greater sidewalk revitalization project.

Parklets, which are about one parking space in size, extend sidewalks into the parking lane for greater pedestrian use and often include seating, tables, gardens, landscaping or other enhancements.

Many Bay Area communities including San Francisco, Albany and Berkeley have incorporated parklets in their urban areas.

Supervisor Gioia recently toured San Francisco parklets with a group of El Sobrante residents and County planners to get ideas. The County is hoping the El Sobrante parklet project will be a model for other Contra Costa communities.

Parklets will be built in cooperation with adjacent business owners. Planners are developing a simple application and review process for businesses interested in parklets in front of their site.

The parklets would be built with County park dedication funds.

Parklets are one of many upgrades taking place along San Pablo Dam Road over the next year. The County's revitalization project, which runs from Appian Way to Hillcrest Road, includes new and improved sidewalks, benches, bus stops, garbage cans, landscaping planters, and street trees.

Supervisor Gioia is also working with local residents to improve the area behind the El Sobrante Library. The plan is to convert unused open space along San Pablo Creek into a pedestrian-friendly park with native plants and a walking path.

The library parking lot is also being repaved with environmentally-friendly pervious material to allow for drainage.

For more information email Terrance Cheung or call him at 510-231-8688.



(Left) Supervisor Gioia visiting parklets in San Francisco with El Sobrante residents.

Supervisor Gioia Elected to Lead State Association of Counties

Supervisor Gioia was elected in November by County Supervisors from around the state to become 2014 President of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC). He has served as a Vice President for two years.

CSAC represents the interests of county government on the federal and state level. As a CSAC officer, Supervisor Gioia has met with representatives of the White House, U.S. Senators Feinstein and Boxer, Governor Brown and the leadership of the California Senate and Assembly on behalf of issues facing California counties such as healthcare and criminal justice.

Supervisor Gioia has always strongly believed that counties should invest more on its prevention services. During his installation speech, he said "We know, and research bears this out, that the more we invest in prevention like health and wellness programs, youth services, and workforce training, to name just a few, the less we spend down the road on medical care and criminal prosecution and jails. We either invest now or pay more later."

Watch Supervisor Gioia's entire installation speech on his YouTube page.

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Other Elected Officials

House of Representatives:

Congressman George Miller, III
(District 7)

(510) 262-6500 - Richmond Office

Congressman John Garamendi
(District 10)

(925) 757-7187 - District Office

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

Assemblywoman Susan Bonilla
(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 <http://contra.napanet.net/maddybook/>. Click on Board Advisory Body Information. Applications are available on-line, or through our office. There are current openings on:

Contra Costa Emergency Medical Care Committee

Leticia Andreas (925) 646-4690

Contra Costa Fire Protection Advisory Commission

Shawn Leuze (925) 941-3318

Contra Costa Library Commission

Corinne Kelly (925) 927-3206

Regular Public Meetings

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Meets at 9:00 a. m. every Tuesday at the County Administration Building, 651 Pine St, in Martinez

El Cerrito City Council

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

North Richmond Municipal Advisory Council

Meets at 5 p.m. on the second Wednesday of every month at 515 Silver Avenue in North Richmond

Pinole City Council

Meets at 6 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday at Pinole City Hall, 2131 Pear Street, Pinole

Richmond City Council

Meets at 7 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday at Richmond City Hall, 440 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond

San Pablo City Council

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

Follow Supervisor Gioia on:



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www.flickr.com/johngioia2013



www.youtube.com/SupervisorGioia