

The Wide-Ranging Work of the County

By Federal Glover

“Government,” is a difficult thing to wrap your arms around. It is not a person or object you can point to. Making it more difficult, oftentimes there is no distinction between federal, state, county and city governments. “Government” gets melted down into some amorphous “glob” impossible to describe. When people see workers fixing a street, they just know that it is their tax dollars at work and they don’t care which government is handling the task. But if it is a county road, it is a good bet those are county workers.

When someone goes to a health clinic in Pittsburg, Bay Point, Brentwood or Antioch to just see a nurse or a doctor, they don’t think of those health professionals as county employees.

When prospective jurors go to the Delta Court in Pittsburg, the assistant D.A.s, the public defender, guards and recording clerks are seen as employees of the judicial system, but they are part of the county. The librarian reading to kids at your county libraries is paid by the county.

Without the work by vector control, we who live near the Delta would be swatting at a cloud of mosquitoes every time we attempt to relax in our backyard hammock.

Except for Antioch, the county’s Animal Services is responsible for picking that road-kill of wayward raccoon or possum, picking up stray animals and licensing of pets.

If you are down on your luck, the county’s social service worker will determine your eligibility for food stamps or welfare.

If you are looking for a job, county workers are the folks who implement the CalWORKS’ job centers. The county employees at EastbayWORKS One-Stop Career Centers in Pittsburg and Brentwood help you create a resume, recommends additional training if necessary and provides assistance in your job hunt.

If you are a divorcee with children, the county is responsible for making sure you get financial support from your ex-spouse.

The firefighter who rushes into a smoke-filled house to save a pet or young child is paid by the county. The firefighter/paramedic who is sometimes the first to respond to your 911 call for a heart attack is on the county payroll.

These are just some of the things the county does for East County residents.

There is a division of responsibility between the county and the cities. The cities are responsible for certain services such as police services, road maintenance, water treatment, sewage, parks, recreation, planning, zoning, issuing permits for businesses, events, renovations and development. These are huge investments and take up the majority of a city’s budget.

The county must provide these same services to the unincorporated communities. In addition, the county must provide services mandated by the state, everything from social welfare, the maintenance of county roads and providing health services for those who can’t afford a healthcare plan other than that offered by the county. Contra Costa County goes beyond those mandates to provide what extra services it can afford such as care for victims of domestic violence and the homeless.

For instance, even though East County is served by two – soon to be three – medical centers, the county Health Department, the county’s largest department, operates four clinics in East County.

For the months of January and February, the Pittsburg Health Clinic has had 53,045 visits, Antioch, 10,331; Bay Point Health Clinic, 3,243; Brentwood, 11,707.

The county's second largest department is our Employment & Human Services department. In East County alone, as of February, the department's CalWORKS program is aiding 7,548 individuals, assisting 17,775 people with MediCal, and handling 1,112 food stamp cases.

The county, through the Community Development Department, partners with the cities in finding money for affordable housing including the new attractive housing in downtown Antioch and Bay Point.

In addition, through this office the county has partnered with regional transportation agencies and other regional planning boards to help tackle East County's well-known transportation woes, including securing funding for the Highway 4 Bypass, Highway 4 widening and the planning for eBART and its stations.

Through the county-administered Keller Canyon Mitigation Fund, I have been able to direct monetary support to a wide range of activities and organizations that provide youth services, code enforcement, community beautification, public safety and community services in Bay Point, Pittsburg, Antioch, Oakley and Bethel Island.

It took many years and hard work for the cities and communities of East County to overcome their suspicions of each other in order to work on projects for the good of the entire region. Working cooperatively, we have been able to accomplish a great deal.

The county's efforts may not grab headlines but take the county and all its services out of our lives and the cities would be hard pressed to duplicate what is being done for its residents.

Federal Glover is the county supervisor for District 5. Reach him at dist5@bos.cccounty.us