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Community funding in place for YMCA

by Ruth Roberts

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The Delta Family YMCA in Oakley has reached its community fundraising goal of \$400,000, bringing the organization one step closer to its much-anticipated \$6.4 million expansion.

“This is just great news,” said Mike Erwin, president and CEO of the Delta Region YMCA. “These are significant dollars that have been raised, especially in this challenging economic environment. I’ve been very impressed by the (overall) efforts to raise these dollars. Things are moving ahead.”

In order to qualify for the matching bond monies to build the new facility on O’Hara Avenue, the YMCA was required to raise a total of \$400,000 in local financing. Just a few months ago only \$88,000 had been committed to the project, but since then Supervisor Federal Glover was able to secure \$100,000 through a federal stimulus package. Additional dollars include a \$5,000 donation from Sutter Delta Medical Center, \$200,000 from the Bechtel Corporation, and \$20,000 from Garaventa Enterprises.

Working in conjunction with the Special Kids Foundation – an organization dedicated to special-needs children and their families – the new 25,000-square-foot facility located on 6.4 acres will house services, therapies and programs for the special needs and general population of East County. The plan calls for aerobics, cardiovascular and strength-training facilities, as well as a health and fitness center, family therapy pool, multi-generational technology center and community gathering place. A demonstration and nutritional teaching kitchen will also be housed there, as will a child care facility.

But perhaps the biggest boost to the combined new facility will be the addition of an all-abilities playground for children with limited physical disabilities. The emphasis on the playground, and the facility in general, will be inclusion, family and a healthy lifestyle. Features will include water play areas, sensory integration centers, wheelchair lifts, large wooden playhouses and shaded spaces.

SMF Construction, owned by Oakley City Councilman Jim Frazier, will be donating the construction of the playground, and the Special Kids Foundation will be paying for the equipment, which is expected to cost around \$750,000. In turn, the City of Oakley, which owns the YMCA property, has agreed to maintain the playground in perpetuity.

“We are anxiously awaiting the approval of the (matching) financing and a quick start,” said Frazier. “Once that happens we can begin grading (on the playground) and get some sticks in the ground. We’re all very excited.”

The remainder of the financing will come from the Mt. Diablo YMCA Association, the organization’s parent corporation, along with bond financing gathered from local banks and financial institutions. The community fundraising end of the project was a necessary first step in the process because it serves as a

kind of collateral for the bonds, according to Judith Parker, VP of financial development for the Mt. Diablo Region YMCA. Proposals for the bond dollars have already been submitted to a variety of institutions, and await approval.

Once bond financing is secured, construction on the facility can commence and could be completed in 12 months, although the more likely scenario is that the project will be built in phases, said Erwin.

“Our goal is to build as much as we can as soon as we can,” said Erwin. “It’s a kind of fits and starts thing sometimes with projects like this, but now that we’ve been able to secure a community commitment, we can begin working on our time line. We’re ready to get on with it.”

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