

Volunteer Center and Live Oak Family Resource Center move in to state-of-the-art building in Live Oak

By JENNA BROGAN

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SANTA CRUZ -- After three years of planning, and with the help of \$4.5 million from the Santa Cruz Redevelopment Agency and \$1 million in donations, the Volunteer Center and Live Oak Family Resource Center have finally opened up shop in a shiny new building in Live Oak.

Friday evening, the two agencies hosted a preview party for donors and campaign volunteers to celebrate the efforts in making the site a reality. "We're happy to celebrate this occasion," said Betsey Lynberg, Redevelopment Agency director, "We wanted to make sure that these organizations that serve the community and enable others to serve, have a permanent location."

As of last week, the agencies are moved in to their Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, certified digs at 17th Avenue and Capitola Road. The building boasts a green design from its cork floors to its large windows and solar energy system, said architect Jacquelyn Low.

"The goal was to showcase the green design of a building," Low said. "We tried to get silver LEED certification, but in the process, the owners, the design team and the community members were so enthralled with green building that eventually we were able to get really close to platinum certification -- it might be the highest in the county."

To achieve certification, Low's 7,000-square-

foot design includes windows that allow for 100 percent natural light in all regularly occupied rooms, 46 percent water reduction when compared to a

baseline of commercial buildings, photovoltaic panels that supply 37 percent of the electrical use, and a heavily insulated outer building shell to reduce energy. Placards throughout the building point out green aspects, such as dual flush toilets, native plants, bamboo cabinets and recycled tires in the outdoor playground surface.

"It was not easy in terms of the economy," said Dr. Marshall Bautz, chairman for the building committee. But Bautz said he believes that the cost-saving benefits will make it all worthwhile.

Karen Delaney, executive director of the Volunteer Center, has already seen a significant decrease in power costs. "I can't believe it costs less to be here than in our leaky old trailer," she laughed. To her, the new building is a dream come true.

"Our old center was less than a quarter of the size of this building and not air-conditioned -- we were having to turn volunteers away because there simply was no space," said Delaney, who manages 5,000 volunteers every year.

"Volunteers do so many great things in this

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community; it's nice to have a place where they feel valued."

Collectively, the two agencies run more than 40 health and human service based programs. With the additional space, they are able to offer community meeting space for fellow nonprofits, civic groups and youth programs, as well as double the number of English as a second language classes, and expand programs to assist seniors with transportation, home repair and resource referrals. According to the agencies, the new building will increase the number of families served by 30 percent and allow for more volunteers.

"It's about time," said Nancy Talley, a volunteer since the mid-1980s. "It was so jammed at the old center; people were on top of each other -- the microwave was in the literacy program room." Similarly, Susan Cabrera, president of the board for the Volunteer Center, reminisced about brushing the termite dust off her desk every morning.

To turn their dream building into a reality, the Redevelopment Agency allocated \$4.5 million contingent upon the two nonprofits raising \$1 million for long-term maintenance at the center. The \$1 million goal was reached last spring after collecting funds from more than 200 donors.

As a result, "for the next 30 years, there's no rent, debt or maintenance fees," said Delaney, who plans to host open houses for the community in the coming weeks. "We couldn't have done it without everyone pitching in."

At A Glance

Volunteer Center and Live Oak Resource Center
 LOCATION: 1740 17th Ave., Suite 2, Santa Cruz
 SIZE: 7,000 square feet
 BUILDING COST: \$4.5 million contributed by Santa Cruz Redevelopment Agency; \$1 million raised by the two resource centers for 30 years of maintenance
 TENANTS: Volunteer Center and Live Oak Family Resource Center

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