

Only Three Meters to Go

Live Oak Pool Enthusiasts Close to Reaching Goal on Major Fundraising Drive County Supervisors Send 50-Meter Pool Center Plans Out To Bid

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by Mary Bryant

Live Oak Swim Center supporters Brigid Simpkins and Edie Rittenhouse reported they are \$25,000 shy of completing their \$600,000 fundraising drive to support the construction of a 50-meter pool. The pool will be the centerpiece of the county's new Live Oak Community Swim Center, a project that is already underway on 17th Avenue.

"We are 95 percent of the way or [have] three meters to go," reported Simpkins using the 50-meter length of the soon-to-be constructed pool as a measuring stick for the Pool of Dreams fundraising effort. "I just think it is wonderful what the community has done."

Beginning with a state grant secured for the county of \$150,000, Simpkins and Rittenhouse have spearheaded a multi-year campaign to raise enough private donations to assure the county could expand construction of the Live Oak pool from 25 yards to 50 meters. The larger sized pool is



Within reach of her fundraising goals for an olympic-sized pool, swim advocate Brigid Simpkins holds on for the final push.

necessary to host a wide variety of swimming programs. A 50-meter pool at the University of California at Santa Cruz is the only competition sized facility currently open in the county.

Without Rittenhouse and Simpkins' fundraising work, the larger pool might not have been possible, according to First

District Supervisor Jan Beautz.

"I don't think it would have worked without them," said Beautz. Beautz said that the Pool of Dreams campaign had evolved into a model community partnership, bringing the best of local government and private ingenuity together into a project that would benefit

local kids.

"The larger pool will be especially vital for local teens," Beautz added.

Simpkins also praised Beautz for her work.

"She really fought for it. That was real important," said Simpkins.

As late as last summer, the Pool of Dreams fundraising drive appeared stalled. A goal of about \$750,000 seemed out of reach, causing some supporters to remain undecided about pledging donations to the project. Simpkins reported that Beautz stepped in at the time to assure that county staff modified project stipulations in a way that dropped the fundraising goal by about \$150,000.

"It allowed for people [to realize] that [the goal] was attainable," said Simpkins. "But, it was a challenge."

Rittenhouse said that sufficient pledges had recently been received to allow the Pool of Dreams committee the possibility of exceeding the current target of \$600,000.

"We would like to [break our goal] to take care of some

necessities to support swimming programs," said Rittenhouse.

Rittenhouse reported that many of the facility sponsorships had already been sold, however for those interested in making larger contributions, four swim lanes are still available to pledge-makers.

Rittenhouse also reported that the fundraising effort was particularly grateful to one anonymous benefactor who pledged \$200,000 to the drive.

Santa Cruz County Redevelopment Agency Director Tom Burns said he was happy a final resolution was found to decide how big a pool the county could afford to build.

"It's exciting to be finally moving on to the beginning of the construction process," said Burns.

The total cost of the facility will be about \$6 million, said Burns. In addition to the community rooms and offices for county parks employees, the center will house four pools including 50-meter, splash, warm water and toddler pools. □