

# Live Oak celebrates groundbreaking Saturday

Clubs & Associations - 2010

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**LIVE OAK** » After five years of planning, Live Oak families will have a reason to celebrate Saturday: the groundbreaking of a new Boys & Girls Club center.

Carnival games and free barbecue are expected to draw hundreds of youth Saturday to Shoreline Middle School, the site of the \$7.1 million center planned for completion by Fall 2015.

Once built, the center will offer affordable, continuous youth development support for families, unlike seasonal school district and sports programs, said Tamra Taylor, Live Oak School District Superintendent. Annual membership costs \$40.

"For middle-income or low-income families, this is an incredible support to them, in terms of keeping their children safe," Taylor said.

Plans for the center originated in 2009 Live Oak and Sequel meetings, hosted by the County of Santa Cruz, that surveyed residents on

community priorities.

Public safety and more facilities for youth were common themes, said Supervisor John Leopold.

The county, the school district and the Boys & Girls Club came together — unprecedented — to make the center a reality, he said. The county contributed \$5 million from former redevelopment funds. The Boys & Girls Club is responsible for \$1.5 million, of which they have raised a third thus far.

"The county usually doesn't build buildings for other people [entities]," Leopold said. "The school district usually doesn't have other organizations on their school sites. So this was all pretty new."

The Boys & Girls Club of Santa Cruz has operated a site at Shoreline Middle School for 100 students for 10 years, out of a 1,000-square-foot portable and a classroom. The new facility would allow the club to serve 200 students, aged 6 to 18, said Bob Langseth, executive director for the local chapter.

"We are definitely bursting in at the seams with just

## LIVE OAK GROUNDBREAKING

**What:** Live music, barbecue, carnival games and sports to celebrate the groundbreaking of a new Live Oak Boys and Girls Club

**When:** 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday

**Where:** Shoreline Middle School, 855 17th Ave., Live Oak

**Cost:** Free

**Details:** For info, visit [www.boysandgirlsclub.info](http://www.boysandgirlsclub.info) or call 831-423-3138 ext. 23. To donate, visit [tinyurl.com/bglive14](http://tinyurl.com/bglive14) and enter "Live Oak" in the memo.

middle school kids," Langseth said.

The center helps address public safety concerns, said Langseth, since the most dangerous time for youth is between 3-7 p.m.

"That's typically when their parents are still at work, so they're most vulnerable to something happening to them and they're also at a time when they have the least supervision and more likely to get in trouble."

Of the school district's

1,750 students, 79 percent are either low-income, English language learners or foster youth, figures similar to Pajaro Valley's, said Jeremy Ray, Live Oak School District board president.

"I think a lot times people think of Watsonville and they're aware of the poverty that exists, but they may not realize that a big part of Live Oak is very similar," Ray said.

Genesis Smith, 13, said she attends the Live Oak Boys & Girls Club every day to play games and have snacks while she waits for her parents to get home. Without the club, she said, "I'd probably just end up going home doing nothing."

Jonaphan Mason, 11, heads the club's leadership group, and helped gather volunteers for Saturday's groundbreaking. He said he's seen the layout for the center, and he's excited for the new space, students and activities.

"What we're in now is very small, and so it's just going to be an upgrade and it'll just have a lot more stuff to do," Jonaphan said.