

# A Campaign To Save A Community Center

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A treasured community center is in jeopardy in Davenport.

So are special educational programs of inestimable value to a flock of children growing up with few advantages in the northwestern corner of Santa Cruz County.

The community center could be eliminated March 19 if a \$3800 payment is not made on March 18, the due date.

It would probably trigger wipeouts of major educational programs conducted in the building, such as the Head Start program for preschoolers, tutorial programs for older students, public health programs for kids and adults alike.

Parents, teachers, Community Action Board members and Third District Supervisor Phil Harry have joined forces to prevent the catastrophe.

Community residents are now planning special fund-raising

events to help save the building and the programs.

Supervisor Harry pledged last Wednesday at a meeting in the building to do all he can at the governmental level to keep the building and the programs going.

"I'll get together with the director of the Community Action Board program," Harry said, "to see if there is some way we can wiggle around the difficulty. But I do have to tell you that all the county budgets are being cut down, and next year they will be cut down even more to compensate for inflation. Taxes will go up next year, but even then things will be tight."

The building is a Modulux obtained for \$15,000 on a lease-purchase arrangement made by the Community Action Board through the county. The first of four \$3800 payments was made last year when the building was put up on a site.

The Community Action Board

kept the financial plight of the center a secret until recently, thus creating an emergency situation.

Residents at the meeting agreed that if they make special fund-raising efforts to save the building and the programs there may be a good chance to persuade county supervisors the whole enterprise is worth preserving.

Next year the Head Start program can budget some \$105 monthly to help meet the third payment, according to M. Jack Takayanagi, Head Start coordinator for Santa Cruz County. Other efforts can be made to raise the rest of that payment provided the present emergency is dealt with.

The Santa Cruz Jaycees, who have helped in a major way to equip the building, will be asked Monday to help save the center and the programs. The entire county community will be asked to patronize fund-raising events between now and March 18.

What does a building of this type mean to the glorious ethnical mixture of kids growing up in the relatively isolated community?

The Head Start program provides an answer.

Each weekday morning tots line up in a so-called yard of sand, cement dust and gravel before the building, waiting for the arrival of teacher Kathy Petersen and assistant teacher Miguel Comas.

From 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. these youngsters in the 3-4 age bracket encounter in the building a variety of educational experiences not usually open to children of low-income workers.

"We don't have a structured program," Mrs. Petersen said.

"We are not trying to teach these children to read and write and do arithmetic as such. Nor do we push them to achieve. But through their experiences they are offered many learning opportunities."

Comas is a big help in solving some communication problems as well as in developing and supervising activities, Mrs. Petersen said. Children of some field workers speak only Spanish, which is Comas' native language.

In the community center the children care for guinea pigs and fish, discover spatial relationships through special Montessori equipment, learn how to grow plants.

Throughout the Monday through Friday sessions they learn also that school is nice to attend, that other children are pleasant to be with, and that things you learn in school can be applied in regular life situations. So they're ready for real school when they reach the proper age.

The Head Start program also provides a lunch that meets 30 per cent of the student's daily nutritional needs.

Some afternoons and evenings UCSC students come up the coast to the community center to preside over special tutorial programs for elementary, junior high and high school students. Help with school problems is given, English is taught, development of good study skills is aided.

This tutorial program, which

## ARGENTINA'S POPULATION

BUENOS AIRES (AP) — The latest census lists the population of Argentina at 23,364,431. Nearly 40 per cent of the people live in Buenos Aires and its suburbs.

is a boon to children far from libraries, was launched in the spring of 1970 by Joe Diamond, a student at Merrill College.

Other days Esther Goode, public health nurse for the area, holds well baby clinics and immunization clinics in the building. Plans are afoot to provide regular public health programs if the building can be saved.

In the building, too, educational needs of adults are in part met through the help of Ray Evans of the adult education department of Santa Cruz High School. Adult literacy classes are held during summer months and into the autumn, primarily for migrant workers. English is taught to Spanish speaking men.

"The response from parents in the community to the educational programs is exceptional," Mrs. Petersen said.

But Fire Chief Elio Orlando thinks the exceptional thing is the building with its teachers and programs.

"This is a blessed thing," Orlando said last Wednesday. "People here don't have much, but they have this."



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