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"Basketball game to raise money for Red Shield pool in Modesto - The Modesto Bee"
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Author: Deke Farrow
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By Deke Farrow

jfarrow@modbee.com

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jfarrow@modbee.com

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A fundraising basketball game will be held Thursday, April 7, 2016, to help renovate the 1970 swimming pool at The Salvation Army Red Shield Center on Las Vegas Street in west Modesto. About $150,000 in repairs are needed to open the pool to children this spring. Meanwhile, ducks are enjoying the shade and a remaining puddle of water.

Deke Farrow

jfarrow@modbee.com

Brothers Jaquez, left, and Marquez Williams, then both 9, jump into the pool at the Salvation Army Red Shield Community Center in Modesto on June 8 of last year.

Andy Alfaro

Modesto Bee file

Swimmers of all ages enjoyed a dip in the pool at The Salvation Army's Red Shield Center on June 13, 2012.

Debbie Noda

Modesto Bee file

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A team of elected officials and other community leaders will take on area youths in a basketball game Thursday, and the winner already has been decided: The Salvation Army Red Shield Center's community swimming pool.

Constructed in 1970, the pool has needed major work for 20 years, said Jeremiah Williams,

chairman of the Community Action Coalition of Stanislaus County, which is hosting the basketball game.

In June, the county ordered the Red Shield Center to close the pool for a few days to do some temporary plaster work on it, said Lt. Quinton Markham, Salvation Army corps officer at the center. To open this spring, though, the center needed to address long-term issues with the 3,578-square-foot pool, he said.

We're hopeful this event and additional community support will help us reopen the pool in time for summer and keep it open for many summers to come.

Salvation Army Lt. Quinton Markham

Problem was, the Red Shield Center already had other expensive projects on its plate, Markham said.

"Our locker rooms are atrocious, Third World quality, so we had that going on; we have to get the place (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant," he said, adding that restrooms off the center's game room also need to be redone.

"So when the pool problem came along, it was, 'Holy cow, what are we going to do?'A " Markham said.

Salvation Army officials briefly considered filling in the pool and making other use of the area.

"But the whole idea of this (pool) is it's the only game in town, or within reach, for kids who live in this part of town," he said.

When it gets "stinking hot" in Modesto, canals and rivers are tempting spots to cool off but can be deadly, especially for inexperienced swimmers. Prevention of deaths of children in waterways was the driving force when the pool was built in the first place, Markham said.

Fortunately, he said, the office of Rep. Jeff Denham, D-Turlock, recently contacted the Salvation Army, wanting to do something for the Red Shield anyway.

"I happened to mention we were trying to get the pool done, and that caught their interest," Markham said.

It's really about getting people from that neighborhood and people who support that neighborhood together with the elected officials who can help them. Building those partnerships is the main thing a " and kids seeing these partnerships and staying out of trouble, out of gangs.

Jeremiah Williams, on the reasons for the charity basketball game beyond raising money for the pool

Discussions led to the idea of playing the basketball fundraiser.

"We had a target goal of $25,000 to $50,000, but this came together quickly and time wouldn't allow us to shoot for $50,000," Williams said.

The way it works is Team Denham players will pony up $2,500 each to play or have some other team role, Williams said. They will take on a Red Shield all-star team of youths a " some high school age, some older.

Community leaders confirmed to participate in the free charity event include Williams; Denham; Assemblyman ***Adam Gray***, D-Merced; Assemblywoman Kristin Olsen, R-Riverbank, and her husband, Rod; Stanislaus County Supervisors Terry Withrow and Jim DeMartini; Merced County Supervisor Daron McDaniel; Modesto City Councilman Mani Grewal; and Modesto Mayor Ted Brandvold, officiating the coin toss.

A pitch also will be made for donations, Williams said.

I'm looking forward to Thursday's game and facing off against some talented basketball players. More importantly, I hope to see our efforts benefit Modesto families and ensure that the nearby children can continue to enjoy the Red Shield pool during hot summer months.

Rep. Jeff Denham, R-Turlock

The funds raised will go to the roughly $150,000 in work needed to open the pool by May or June, he said.

Williams called the pool restoration "a complete redo. ... They have to gut the gunite (surface), dispose of it, put in new rebar, replumb it, re-gunite it and put in all new lighting and filter systems."

A bigger goal is to replace and add amenities to make the Red Shield pool even more fun and inviting, Markham said. The diving board has been gone a long time, he said, as has a slide into the pool. The Salvation Army wants to buy things such as lane ropes and water polo and volleyball equipment. The coolest addition would be an AquaClimb wall, which attaches to a side of the pool and lets kids climb up on a slight curve and drop into the water.

The deck area around the pool also needs work because water doesn't drain from it properly, Markham said.

Those amenities and repairs would add about $85,000 more to the pool cost, for a total of $235,000, he and Williams said.

Deke Farrow: 209-578-2327

At a glance

What: Charity basketball game

When: April 7. Tours of the Red Shield Center will begin at 4 p.m., followed by pregame activities including the singing of the national anthem at 5:30, and game time at 6.

Where: Salvation Army Red Shield Center, 1649 Las Vegas St., Modesto

Info: Admission is free, on a first-come basis until capacity is reached. Food (donated by Los Amigos Tire & Wheel) and drinks will be available for purchase. Kids can participate in a free photo booth and other center activities. A halftime show will be performed by Red Shield Center youth and staff.

For more information about the game, contact Jeremiah Williams at 209-568-3096. Donations for the Modesto Red Shield pool renovation effort can be made at bit.ly/1VVyaCA.

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Highlights: Adam Gray