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Hoops game to raise funds for Salvation Army pool

BY DEKE FARROW

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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 plaster work, 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.

Problem was, the Red Shield Center already had other expensive projects going, he 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?' " 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.

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 – some high school age, some older.

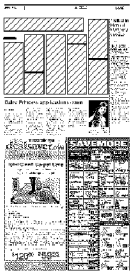
Community leaders confirmed to participate in the free charity event include Williams; Denham; Assemblyman Adam Gray, D-Merced; Assemblywoman Kristin Olsen, R-Riverbank, and her husband, Rod; Stanislaus County Supervisors Terry Withrow and Jim DeMartini; Merced County Supervisor Daron McDaniel; Modesto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

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

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 addi-



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tion 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.

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