

Health Care for All in Santa Clara County Initiative

The County of Santa Clara currently spends \$1.4 billion a year on its Health and Hospital System, 38 percent of the County's annual budget. The County provides medical care to all residents, regardless of their ability to pay.

A recent UCLA study (Center for Health Policy Research - Feb 2005) reports that over 200,000 Santa Clara County residents do not have health insurance for all or part of a one-year period. Working Partnerships-USA, reports that 141,000 are currently living without health insurance at one point in time. They estimate that 108,000 of these residents live below 300 percent of the federal poverty level.

As a part of the Health Care for All Initiative, the Board Chair will work with health care experts in Santa Clara County and throughout the state to determine how best to proceed to identify other community-wide resources to address the issues of the uninsured and the spiraling cost of health care that puts basic services out of reach for so many.

- ❖ Community leaders to work with employers to form larger purchasing groups and increase their buying power, thus expanding access to affordable health care plans.
- ❖ Continuing work begun last year with public agencies to leverage their combined purchasing power by forming a new "Santa Clara County Health Benefits Coalition," to control the rising costs of health care.
- ❖ Creating a step-by-step process to identify specific segments of the uninsured population, e.g., uninsured working young adults, uninsured middle aged adults, uninsured older adults, etc., and working to create avenues to insure those segments.

The Chair is proceeding with this Initiative due to the failure of the federal and state government to show signs that they will be able to enact any universal health insurance plan for Americans.

Even at commercial health insurance rates, the Chair estimates that the cost for health insurance for all uninsured residents in Santa Clara County is the equivalent of 25 percent of the County's \$1.4 billion health and hospital system budget.

Santa Clara County's uninsured population is estimated to be 43 percent Latino, 25 percent Asian-American, 21 percent White, two percent African-American, and nine percent "other." The majority of uninsured adults in the county are employed, but benefits are not offered or they are not eligible with their employer's plans.

Some health care experts believe a cost-sharing plan may work; where employers, employees and third-party or foundation support share the cost of coverage through a large group plan. The purchasing power of any large group over 100,000 people sharply reduces annual premium costs.

The Chair's office will be providing more details about the Initiative in the next four weeks.

Foster Youth Employment Initiative

In Santa Clara County, nearly 150 foster youth a year emancipate. For some reason, society abandons them at this critical point in their young and fragile lives. They are expected to provide an adequate life for themselves despite the fact that many are suffering from emotional trauma, have educational deficiencies and do not have the financial resources to survive on their own. Studies indicate that a significant number of these young adults end up back in more expensive systems of care such as jail and welfare after they emancipate. A report submitted to the Assembly Select Committee on Foster Care revealed very troubling statistics:

- ❖ 46% of foster youth do not complete high school
- ❖ 51% are unemployed
- ❖ 40% are on public assistance
- ❖ 25-40% are homeless
- ❖ 1 out of five are incarcerated.¹

We must do better. It is time to build a safety net for foster youth aging out of the system. We must empower foster youth by providing them with employment and educational opportunities so they can experience successful life outcomes. It is the right thing to do, both morally and fiscally.

Supervisor Beall, in collaboration with the County Executive's office, will assemble a Blue Ribbon Task Force to address the employment needs of emancipating and emancipated foster youth. The Task Force will be charged with building three essential elements that will guarantee success for this venture.

1. In collaboration with the Social Services Agency, establish an employability/educational skill-building avenue for emancipating foster youth.
2. Work with the County Employee Services Agency to expand the successful Welfare to Work unclassified position to foster youth.
3. Reach out to the Valley's employer community to provide employment and paid internship opportunities for deserving youth.

The following key partners have agreed to participate on an employment workgroup:

- ❖ Working Partnership USA
- ❖ Silicon Valley Leadership Group
- ❖ Santa Clara County Foster Parent Association
- ❖ Volunteer Center of Silicon Valley

For more information, please contact Sunshine Borelli at (408) 299-5040.

¹ State of California. Foster Care: California's Most Vulnerable Children - Responsibility Raising Our Next Generation. Assembly Select Committee on Foster Care. California Assembly Select Committee on Foster Care: 21 Nov. 2005.

Long Term Commitment to Environment Viewshed and Hillside Protection

Working with the Board of Supervisors and County staff, as Chair, Supervisor Beall will make establishing strong hillside development regulations and open space protection a priority. The Board of Supervisors and County Staff will work over the next three months to develop practical, strong, and uniform guidelines to protect Santa Clara County viewsheds and hillsides from incompatible development.

The goal will be to include the preservation of remaining natural and historic resources, watersheds and the beauty of the County, and to maintain the highest quality of life for our residents. Priority will be given to safeguarding scenic views and open space by barring structure from ridgelines and hilltops, unless there is no alternative.

The County Board of Supervisors oversees development regulations and polices applicable to hillsides and viewsheds in vast unincorporated areas. Ensuring that development occurs in a manner that meets the following goals is critical to the future of Santa Clara County:

- ❖ Prevents inappropriate development;
- ❖ Preserves the aesthetic and scenic qualities of such areas;
- ❖ Protects the natural conditions and respects existing topography;

Following a Land Use Workshop in August of 2005, the Board directed Planning Office staff to develop draft policies and procedures to implement preliminary recommendations related to Viewshed Protection. Additionally, staff was directed to conduct appropriate public and community outreach and report back to the Board of Supervisors with recommended policy and implementation plan by Spring 2006. A Viewshed Protection Stakeholders group has been established with representatives from each Supervisorial office.

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Long Term Commitment to the Environment Parks Charter Initiative

During the next 20 years, the County is projected to grow by another 400,000 residents to a population of over 2 million. Actions taken today will determine how "livable" our communities will be. In December 2005, the Board voted unanimously to pass a resolution placing Renewal of the Charter on the June 2006 Ballot with full funding for 12 years. As a part of our long-term commitment to the Environment, every effort will be made to secure funding for County Parks.

The Park Charter Fund is vital to:

- ❖ Protect watersheds and natural areas of outstanding scenic quality
- ❖ Assure that the current and future community needs are met
- ❖ Contribute to the "quality of life" for County residents

The Park Charter Fund is not a new or additional tax. It is a small set-aside of existing property taxes that is devoted to the management and expansion of the Santa Clara County Park system. The fund has been the primary source of funding for County Parks since 1972 and was last renewed by over 80% of the voters. The current set-aside equates to less than 1 percent of the County's total budget.

The Park Charter Fund provides stable revenue for your County Parks system, which includes:

- ❖ Over 260 miles of trails;
- ❖ 10 reservoirs;
- ❖ Almost 45,000 acres in 28 regional parks - such as: Hellyer, Rancho San Antonio, Ed Levin, Los Gatos Creek, Almaden Quicksilver, Mt. Madonna, Anderson Reservoir, the newly enlarged Coyote Lake-Harvey Bear Ranch, and the ever-popular Vasona Lake.

In a variety of urban and hillside settings, Santa Clara County Parks offers affordable water- and land-based recreational activities for all age groups and interests. To learn more about Santa Clara County Parks, which is celebrating 50 years in service, go to www.parkhere.org.