

Newsbrief

LAFAYETTE PARK GRAND OPENING:

Rec and Parks, Heart of Los Angeles (HOLA), and the Everychild Foundation announced Feb. 17 the opening of the \$9.8 million Lafayette Park Recreation Center. The 15,000-square-foot eco-friendly facility, designed by the award-winning firm Kanner Architects, features brand new multipurpose classroom spaces, a technology lab and a state-of-the-art gymnasium.

The Lafayette Park Recreation Center is a result of the historic public-private partnership between the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks and HOLA to transform Lafayette Park into a versatile campus that will provide exceptional academic, arts, recreation and athletic programs to the surrounding underserved community. The project materialized in response to demands by a growing neighborhood whose needs outgrew the existing 3,700 square foot senior center. In 2006, Jon Kirk Mukri, General Manager, Rec and Parks; Mitch Moore, Founder of HOLA; and Tony Brown, HOLA Executive Director; met to discuss their common interest: to create a model public-private partnership to build out and sustain parks and recreation centers in underserved areas. The location for this ambitious project was Lafayette Park in the heart of LA's Rampart District. From that meeting spawned an idea: since both organizations were serving the same popula-

tion, the Department of Recreation and Parks and HOLA would come together to transform the park into something that would invigorate the neighborhood and improve the lives of its residents.

"The Department of Recreation and Parks and Heart of Los Angeles (HOLA), have formed an innovative partnership between a public agency and a non-profit organization both dedicated to supporting local community needs. This partnership not only provides educational, cultural, athletic, and arts programming for numerous local residents, but allows for the successful fundraising effort to renovate, and expand the Lafayette Recreation Center," said Jon Mukri, General Manager of the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks. "This newly renovated, state-of-the-art, LEED recreation center will house joint Recreation and Parks, and HOLA programs covering a myriad of activities benefiting the children throughout the community. I am very proud of this partnership and the many things we have accomplished together."

"We've brought together some of the best in class partners and individuals to help solve larger societal problems and we expect the results to surpass any individual effort out there," said Tony Brown, Executive Director, HOLA. "This is a tangible roadmap for rebuilding a stronger community able to solve present day and future challenges."

Together, Mukri and Brown imagined a public space in a contemporary way that would create a

new paradigm of the public park. Rec and Parks and HOLA formed an unprecedented partnership and set out to raise additional funds that would be needed to not only complete this ambitious project, but also add new learning spaces and many other state-of-the-art enhancements. In 2007, they achieved their goal by combining Prop K, Prop 12 and Quimby funds with a private \$1 million dollar gift from the Everychild Foundation. Over \$2 million were raised from the private sector funds from not only the Everychild Foundation but also the W.M. Keck Foundation, Weingart Foundation, Skirball Foundation, Anthem Blue Cross Foundation and the Los Angeles Lakers Youth Foundation. The money raised has enabled the Department of Recreation and Parks and HOLA to provide expanded programming support so that thousands of at-risk youth will receive exceptional classes and programs for free in addition to a variety of affordable low cost high quality classes for all ages.

"HOLA's long success in keeping children out of gangs, in school and engaged in positive activities convinced us that they would make excellent use of our grant dollars with the Lafayette Park project," said Jacqueline Caster, Founder and President of the Everychild Foundation.

The newly rebuilt and expanded center will allow Rec and Parks and HOLA to significantly increase the number of neighborhood youth served in 2011 by more than 60 percent. Together

they will reach 2,300 youth annually, nearly 1,000 more than can be served today. The new and improved Lafayette Park Recreation Center will provide kids with alternatives to unhealthy behaviors by offering hope and inspiration in lieu of gangs, crime and disenfranchisement. Local families will be able to utilize the new center, as they would a safe backyard, a comfort that so many in the community do not have. In addition, HOLA will combine its free academic, arts and sports programs with City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks' activities and classes. Underserved youth will benefit from new recreational facilities that will include a field turf soccer field, state-of-the-art gymnasium, wireless computer lab, classrooms, and community meeting rooms. The community will have access to HOLA's art studios, fine arts library, dance studio, digital media center and educational learning centers. What's more the gymnasium will bear the Lakers logo on center court and host annual basketball leagues and clinics.

The eco-friendly building is designed to meet the objectives of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design is on track to be the first City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks LEED certified building. The building's LEED features include the use of recycled and sustainable materials as well as glass on a large portion of the gymnasium's north wall to provide natural light and ventilation.

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Page 30



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