



MEDIA ALERT

Media Contact:

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WHAT: Grand Opening of Santee Community garden and open space

WHO: Dr. John Porter, FMSD Superintendent; Madison Nguyen, Former Vice-Mayer; Tam Nguyen, District 7 City Council Member, City of San Jose; Gregory R. Kepferle, CEO, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County; Omar Torres and Thanh Tran, FMSD Board members; Van Le, East Side Union High School District Board member; Domingo Candelas and Alex Wara, representatives from Senator Jim Beall's office

WHEN: Thursday, April 16, 2015, 10:00 - 11:00 am

WHERE: Bridges Academy Middle School, 1702 McLaughlin Avenue, San Jose, CA 95122
**For press- closer parking is available at 1665 Santee Drive*

Grand Opening of Santee Community Garden and Open Space, Where Families Can Spend Quality Time Together

SAN JOSE, CA, April 2, 2015 – Santee Community families will now have access to a community garden and open space where they can spend quality time together, exercise, and grow organic fruits and vegetables thanks to a collaboration between Catholic Charities' Franklin McKinley Children's Initiative (FMCI), the Franklin McKinley School District (FMSD), Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services (PRNS), and the City of San Jose Housing Department. A grand opening to celebrate the new open space and community garden will be held on Thursday, April 16, 2015 from 10:00 am to 11:00 am at Bridges Academy Middle School, 1702 McLaughlin Avenue, San Jose, CA 95122.

FMCI, FMSD, Garden to Table, and the City of San Jose worked to create a community garden and enhance the field at Bridges Middle School. Funding came from the City of San Jose Housing Department, Place Based Initiative, Community Development Block Grant, and Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services.

Three years ago the City of San Jose Housing Department implemented the Place Based Initiative to address the needs of specific neighborhoods focusing on creating, "Clean, Safe, and Engaged Neighborhoods." Given limited funds and staff capacity, the city feels it is important to create and identify resources, capacity, and power.

The Place Based strategy is currently initiated in the Santee Neighborhood, where it has been long served as a port of entry for newly arriving immigrants entering the United States to find their first home. Several years ago, Santee was known for its high crime rates and terrible housing conditions. With many programs the City has invested in such as Project Crackdown, Strong Neighborhood Initiative (SNI), and the court ordered injunction in Santee, the neighborhood has seen significant improvements in safety. However, there is much that remains to be done to improve this community.

The Franklin McKinley Children's Initiative (FMCI) was launched to assist with the transformation of the neighborhood and the schools in the neighborhood. The community along with FMCI has been engaged to identify and implement key improvements that help deter crime and gang activity, such as lighting and safety around schools, community gardens, and/or improvements to facilities owned by nonprofit agencies serving the neighborhood. With the new community garden and open space, the Santee Community will now be able to create a healthy active lifestyle and families can garden, play, and enjoy time together.

About Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County

Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County changes lives for good. We help people of all cultures and beliefs rise up out of poverty and overcome the barriers to self-sufficiency. Because most lives are a complex pattern of choices and circumstances, we take a holistic approach to helping people change their lives, taking into account the whole person as well as their family and life situations. We do this through a broad range of services, including job skills training and placement, older adult services, mental health and substance abuse counseling, housing assistance, financial education, immigration support, and refugee resettlement. We also provide educational programs that help young people develop into self-sufficient adults. Each year, we serve more than 40,000 people in need.

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