



News Release

For Immediate Release
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A Community Rallies After Tragic Drowning Deaths

Regional Water Safety Training Center – Empire Community Pool

Stanislaus County, CA – Three young brothers (Eloy, José and Daniel Yopez) from the town of Empire drowned in the Tuolumne River in the summer of 2003. As the youngest of the Yopez brothers struggled in the cold, swift moving water, the two older brothers tried to save him. Tragically, all three perished. This tragedy sparked an amazing community effort resulting in the grand opening of the Regional Water Safety Training Center – Empire Community Pool.

On **Friday, June 12, 2009 at 6 p.m.**, the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors will host the grand opening ceremony and a community celebration for the Regional Water Safety Training Center – Empire Community Pool. The public event will begin promptly at 6:00pm and be held at the site located at Empire Community Park near the **corner of State Route 132 and I Street in Empire, CA.**

A dedication ceremony at 6 p.m. will be kicked-off by local artist, Emily Kay Shrader's, singing of the National Anthem, followed by remarks by County leaders and key community stakeholders. Several special recognitions will also be showcased including the three trees and a bench in remembrance of the inspiration behind the project (Eloy, José and Daniel) and the raising of the center's U.S. flag in honor of Warren Brumley, a veteran and active member of the Empire community who passed away last summer.

Photo Ops – The dedication ceremony will be followed by a community celebration that will open the facility for use. Members of the Yopez family will take the ceremonial “first dip” into the facility. They will be followed by the winners of the local schools' essay contest. The Friends of the Empire Community Pool will also be on hand to conduct a hot dog/nachos fundraiser to support the ongoing operations and programs at the facility. Tiles will also be available for purchase (\$20 for 6x6 and \$10 for a 4x4) and to be painted for the “Supporters Wall” located within the facility. Tiles already purchased and painted will be on display as will be a poem, “Living Waters,” by Ed Bearden, Poet Laureate for the City of Modesto, inspired by this community partnership.

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Stanislaus County Police Activities League will also be on-hand to provide fun activities for the kids including face painting, recreational games, bounce house, scavenger hunt and a relay course. The City of Modesto Water Division, Modesto Irrigation District, and Turlock Irrigation District will also be in attendance making available water safety and conservation information. Stanislaus County residents and families are invited to attend this community celebration.

“This is a great day for our community,” stated Kathaleen Allen, Chairperson of the Empire Municipal Advisory Council. “Out of this incredible tragedy has come something that is designed to saves lives and to be a safe place for our children and families to gather.”

The Regional Water Safety Training Center - Empire Community Pool is envisioned as a safe recreational alternative for children and families where supervised swimming and water safety education can be provided as a deterrent to swimming in the areas many dangerous canals and rivers. The approved Regional Water Safety Training Center - Empire Community Pool will include a 5-lane 25-yard pool and a 706 square foot recreational spray playground. These aquatic components better achieve and address the needs of the Empire community and region. Furthermore, they enhance the two areas deemed most important to the community, swimming lessons and family recreation.

On May 20, 2008, the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors approved awarding the Design-Build Construction Contract for this project to Diede Construction Inc. of Lodi, California. Partnering with the community and critical partners, Stanislaus County was successful in obtaining a \$1,000,000 grant from the State of California and \$200,000 from the Stewardship Council. Additional funding from the Tobacco Tax Fund, Public Facility Fees and private donations collected by the Friends of the Empire Community Pool made whole the project budget for construction, three-years of operations for the facility, and one year of programming for recreational swim. The Friends of the Empire Community Pool is continuing efforts to support the ongoing operations and programs at the Regional Water Safety Training Center moving forward including actively conducting fundraising efforts.

The friends of the Regional Water Safety Training Center – Empire Community Pool include, but is not limited to, Congressman Dennis Cardoza, Senator Jeff Denham, the Empire Municipal Advisory Council, the Empire Union School District, the Friends of the Empire Community Pool, the Stanislaus County Parks and Recreation Commission, the City of Modesto, Modesto Irrigation District, Turlock Irrigation District, the Stanislaus County Police Activities League and other local partners and private contributors who have generously contributed to make the dream a reality.

The Regional Water Safety Training Center will be available for public use for the inaugural swim season beginning the weekend of June 13-14, 2009. For additional information regarding the swim schedule and available programs, please contact the Stanislaus County Police Activities League at 209.529.9121 or visit their website at www.stancopal.org.

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