

## 49ers star leads effort to remake Richmond apartment complex

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San Francisco 49ers star Vernon Davis brought his million-dollar smile to a low-income Richmond apartment complex Thursday.

Community residents and city leaders hope Davis' leadership will lead a remodel of the multipurpose room and other facilities at the Crescent Park apartments.

Davis announced the launch of "Positive Impact Project," billed as a "re-imagining" of Crescent Park's Multicultural Family Resource Center, inside the center. More than 80 residents, city leaders, police and children were on hand.

"I just want to thank everyone for giving us a chance to revitalize the community here," Davis said. "We are proud to be here."

The initiative represents a partnership between the Vernon and Vontae Davis Family Foundation and the interior design company Davis cofounded, Modern Class Design, along with nonprofit EAH Housing, which owns the 378-unit complex on Hartnett avenue.

The plan is to make over the Multicultural Family Resource Center with staff and resident input, said EAH spokesman Sean Skinner. The remodel will include new furniture and other amenities, along with art developed in part by youths who live in the complex.

Plans also call for outfitting the center's computer lab with new computers and software as well an upgrade of the surrounding outdoor recreation area.

Work is scheduled to be completed in about a year.

EAH Housing President and CEO Mary Murtagh said Davis and his partners' vision was instrumental in the partnership.

"We share a real passion for trying to help this community," Murtagh said.

A superstar tight end who has played his entire career with the 49ers, Davis told attendees that he was raised by his grandmother in a tough Washington D.C. neighborhood.

"I was on probation in sixth grade, but I changed my life early," Davis said. "My foundation is geared toward the arts, because when I was a young kid in high school, in order to be cool you had to play football or basketball. But it shouldn't be that ... My message to the kids is you can do anything you want if you put your mind to it."

Richmond Mayor Gayle McLaughlin praised Davis for being a good role model and demonstrating excellence in both athletics and arts. She said artistic expression is part of Richmond's renaissance.

"Today we have an opportunity to celebrate what's going to be a rejuvenation of this community center thanks to Vernon and his organization and to EAH," McLaughlin said.

Skinner said the contribution amounts among the foundation, MCD and EAH Housing had not yet been finalized.

Richmond police officials were also on hand Thursday. Deputy Chief Allwyn Brown said instilling a culture of arts and academic achievement were crucial to continuing progress toward lowering crime rates in south Richmond apartment complexes like Crescent Park.

Brown said Officer Gary Lewis, who was also on hand, runs the "Straight A's Club" to spur academic achievement at Crescent Park.

"Today's announcement, along with programs already in place, help to create a culture here where academic achievement is celebrated," Brown said.

At the end of the presentation, Davis unveiled an interactive mural project started by Bay Area artist Jonathan Brumfield. The mural, titled "Imagination," depicts a tree with sundry branches sprouting in all directions. The concept was selected by Davis, who on Wednesday sorted through submissions by local kids.

The winning concept was sketched by 10-year-old Alex Scott, then writ large by Brumfield.

"A tree can continue to grow," Davis said. "That's the message I wanted to make here."

Davis thanked Scott on Thursday. The little girl was mum in front of the big crowd, but her mom said her enthusiasm was strong.

"It's an amazing honor for her," Teaira Scott said.