



Superior Court of California, County of Alameda
Hayward Hall of Justice
24405 Amador Street
Hayward, CA 94544

PRESS RELEASE

Alameda County's First Children's Waiting Room

Thanks to donations from the Women Lawyers of Alameda County (WLAC) and a First 5 construction grant, the first Children's Waiting Room (CWR) in Alameda County is scheduled to officially open on Thursday, July 1, 2004 at the Hayward Hall of Justice. Through the generosity of donations made in memory of attorney Marian Chapman, a local muralist was hired to transform the Children's Waiting Room space into a "Friendly Forest" motif that offers up to 14 children ages infant to 16 years a safe and secure place to wait while their parent or guardian is conducting business in the Hayward courthouse. The Children's Waiting Room makes it possible for siblings to stay in the waiting room together rather than be separated due to their difference in age. An area within the room is also set aside to accommodate nursing mothers. The WLAC was the chief fundraiser for the project, helping organize other local bar associations to support the project as well. Jeanne Finberg, an attorney in Alameda County and chair of the Women Lawyers of Alameda County's Children's Waiting Room Committee, commented, "WLAC is thrilled to have contributed to setting up the first children's waiting room in Alameda County. The room will be so helpful for the children, the courts, the parties and the community. Now we can be sure that children who need to be in the courthouse will be safe and entertained."

The Children's Waiting Room was created in accordance with the court's overall strategic plan to establish Children's Waiting Rooms pursuant to AB 177 Chapter 115, Statutes of 1999, which provides funding for Children's Waiting Rooms in court facilities, and to ensure that Children's Waiting Rooms are family friendly with appropriate seating, privacy, orientation materials and accouterments such as toys, books, and videos. In this time of economic uncertainty the Children's Waiting Room was successfully built solely on donations, and its operating expenses will come exclusively from a trust account established from a legislatively authorized filing fee surcharge to support children's waiting rooms. "The Children's Waiting Room expresses the spirit of collaboration forged between the Court, the county, local bar associations, educators, and community leaders, working to advance the needs of children and families. After years of planning, the opening of the children's waiting room on July 1st addresses a longstanding unmet need at the Hayward Hall of Justice. We look forward to the day where the needs of children will be met at all of our court locations throughout the county," stated Barbara Miller, Presiding Judge for the Superior Court of California, County of Alameda.

Modeled after successful waiting rooms in courthouses in other counties, the Children's Waiting Room also provides a place for creativity and imagination to flourish. The Hayward Hall of Justice Children's Waiting Room will be staffed by credentialed childcare providers trained and supervised by the Alameda County Office of Education, the Court's operating partner in this endeavor. A Children's Waiting Room coordinator with a bachelor's degree in early childhood experience, who is currently an Alameda County Office of Education employee, has been working with court staff since June 1, 2004 to finalize preparations for the opening on July 1, 2004. "I am delighted that Hayward will have the very first children's waiting room in Alameda County. We need to do more for children and this is a major step forward," said County Superintendent Sheila Jordan, who serves as Honorary Co-Chair of the project along with Hayward Mayor Bertie Cooper and Sheriff Charlie Plummer.

In early fall of 2004 the Superior Court, the Alameda County Office of Education, and the Women Lawyers of Alameda County plan to hold a "grand opening" ceremony that will serve to feature the Children's Waiting Room's contribution to the community and acknowledge those who have donated to its achievement. The Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE), the Women Lawyers of Alameda County (WLAC), the Alameda County General Services Agency, judges, attorneys, and others who have assisted with the efforts to open the Children's Waiting Room will all be recognized at the event.

The Hayward Hall of Justice will be holding a special viewing of the Children's Waiting Room from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 30th, 2004. For more information or to attend this event, please contact: Sherri Camps, Trial Court Administrator, Hayward Hall of Justice, (510) 670-5056