



# NEWS RELEASE

Contra Costa County  
**JOHN GIOIA** (joy-a)  
District One  
Board of Supervisors

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 28, 2014

### Groundbreaking of a First-Of-Its-Kind Home for Formerly Incarcerated Women in Contra Costa County

What: Groundbreaking of a live-in home for formerly incarcerated women and their families.  
When: **Thursday, May 29, 2014**  
**10 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.**  
Where: 1724 Fred Jackson Way, North Richmond, CA.  
Who: Bishop Edwina Perez-Santiago – REACH Fellowship Director; John Gioia – County Supervisor; David Livingston – County Sheriff; Gayle McLaughlin – Richmond Mayor; Phillip Kader – County Probation Officer; Joseph Villarreal – County Housing Authority Director; Don Gilmore – Community Housing Development Corporation Director.

**North Richmond, Calif.,** A North Richmond house that's been vacant for many years will soon be refurbished to provide housing and supportive services exclusively for women returning from prison and their children. The house, now owned by Community Housing Development Corporation (CHDC), was formerly a Contra Costa County Housing Authority property. Once construction is completed, the 4-bedroom duplex will house up to eight women and their young children with wrap-around social services including case management, job training, and life skills.

Michele Bonge, 34, will be one of the first residents to live there. "This place will give me a stable environment so I can pursue employment opportunities," said Bonge, who was released from Solano County jail in late February for grand theft. She hopes to be able to celebrate birthdays with her children ages 10, 11, and 14, who are currently living with their father. "I've been couch surfing with friends since I was released," she said.

"We are blessed with the support from the County and our partners," said Bishop Edwina Perez-Santiago, Director of REACH Fellowship, the agency that will be expanding their services to provide gender specific programs with the new house. "REACH is the only organization that we know of that provides reentry services solely to women to help reunite them with their families and children," said Bishop Perez-Santiago.

Supervisor John Gioia is a leading proponent for providing community funds for innovative projects such as this through AB109, the State's Public Safety Realignment Plan. He also helped lead the development of the Countywide Reentry Strategic Plan in 2011.

"Contra Costa County has been seen by many as a progressive leader for changing the way we help our formerly incarcerated residents and supporting their return to the community," said Supervisor Gioia, whose West County District includes the unincorporated community of North Richmond. "Having REACH as our partner strengthens our collective work to make sure no one in our community is left behind."

A low-interest loan from the County's Neighborhood Stabilization Program helped fund the home's \$242,250 remodeling project, which is expected to be completed by the end of summer.

Immediately following the groundbreaking, the public will be invited to light refreshments at REACH Fellowship's current site at 325 Chesley Avenue.

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