Richmond’s RYSE youth center celebrates

By Robert Rogers
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RICHMOND — Four years ago, the RYSE Center was just taking shape

Today, it’s one of the city’s proudest success stories.

And it keeps adding new chapters.

“This community knew that young people could lead a center and develop the programming and have adult allies to help make it work,” said County Supervisor John Gioia, one of the founders of the Macdonald Ave. youth center. “And that’s what’s great about this center. It’s an alliance between adults and youths, but the youths lead the effort.”

On Dec. 8 hundreds gathered to celebrate the 4th anniversary of the RYSE Youth Center with a ribbon cutting for the opening of an outdoor stage, gardens, and basketball court.

In addition to the grand opening of the RYSE Outside’s project, the youth center distributed hundreds of toys to Richmond families.

The new outdoor area was funded mostly by the Bechtel and Lesher Foundations, to the tune of more than $200,000.

The Dean & Margaret Lesher Foundation, established in 1989 and named for the founder of the Contra Costa Times, grants hundreds of thousands annually for community improvement and educational scholarships in Contra Costa County.

“Dean would be thrilled to see this,” said Lesher Foundation Executive Director Kathleen Odne, gesturing toward the outdoor ampitheater and dozens of children. “We are ongoing supporters of RYSE programming.”