

Boxer vows med school support

UC RIVERSIDE: The senator says she will continue searching for financial support for the project.

BY LORA HINES
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Sen. Barbara Boxer on Friday appeared at UC Riverside to renew support for its medical school, which is supposed to open in 2012.

Boxer said a medical school would bring jobs and health care to the Inland area, which is starving for both. She spoke briefly after meeting with university

Chancellor Timothy White and founding medical school Dean Dr. G. Richard Olds.

But it's still unclear whether the med school is going to get the federal, state and local funding it needs to open, despite optimism expressed by Boxer and Olds. The federal and state governments haven't yet passed their budgets. The Riverside County Board of Supervi-

sors, which recently pledged to give the school \$5 million and help it raise another \$5 million, also hasn't approved its budget.

When it opens, the UCR med school would be the first new medical school to open in California in 40 years, Boxer said.

"It will create hundreds of jobs and spur economic development," she said. "It will attract millions of dollars in research and develop new businesses."

Along with Boxer, California Sen. Dianne Feinstein and Rep. Joe Baca, D-Rialto, are seeking \$1 million in federal money to pay for a medical simulation laboratory for the med school. The lab would give students a place to practice administering medicine without touching patients.

Last year, the med school got \$4 million through federal earmarks for construction of facilities in preparation for its opening.

"Every \$1 million can be leveraged," Boxer said. "A small amount of money isn't going to be the answer. We need to get the federal government to get behind this."

The Obama administration's proposed 2011 budget would make available \$100 million to new medical schools in areas with shortages of health care professionals. UCR's med school is one of 13 nationwide that would compete for a share of that money, if lawmakers

keep it in the budget.

Meanwhile, no one knows if the \$15 million included in the state budget for the school will stay. Without it, a \$10 million pledge from Kaiser Permanente for the school is on hold.

The UC Board of Regents approved establishment of the medical school in summer 2008. It is estimated the first incoming class of 50 students will enroll in 2012.

Reach Lora Hines at 951-368-9444 or lhines@PE.com



Muriel Markham-Lussier, left, visits with Bennie Stafford, during a gathering of the Moreno Valley Settlers.

DAN ELLIOTT/SPECIAL TO THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

MORE THAN A PICNIC

Attendance dropping at Moreno Valley Settlers' annual event

BY LAURIE LUCAS
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

The Moreno Valley Settlers are rather unsettled about the big event June 19.

"They're afraid it will be their group's last hurrah."

Survivors of the club sadly note that attendance at its annual picnic at the senior center has steadily declined over the past 3½ decades. The turnout used to be 200, double that for last year's potluck, when the old-timers would haul in their kids and grandchildren to hear good stories, schmooze and share food.

"Not now," lamented Bennie Stafford, 77. She's one of 50 Settlers who are determined to keep Moreno Valley's history alive in the face of an apathetic younger generation and dwindling pio-

neers left to tell their tales.

The picnic's big draw used to be the slide show about the development of Moreno Valley from 1890 to the 1960s.

Stafford can't understand why interest in the Settlers and its one and only yearly function is flagging. The group has no president because no one wants the job. There are no membership dues, no fundraisers and no goals besides fellowship and reminiscing about — ta-dum — the good ol' days.

"We haven't tried to accomplish anything except bring people together," said Settler Muriel Markham-Lussier. "Well," she quipped, "there are some in town we'd like to get rid of."

The Settlers are witty, wise and full of yarns about

this place they called home long before the city's incorporation in 1984 and its population soared to its current 185,000.

At 89, the stylish Markham-Lussier is the Settlers' self-proclaimed cougar, remarried to a man six years her junior. At a recent gathering at Stafford's, she spiked her coffee with a nip of Baileys Irish Cream.

"I don't pay attention to ages, dates or weight," she said.

She moved to Moreno Valley in 1958 when there were 4,000 registered voters. "Everyone knew everyone," Markham-Lussier recalled. "Remember the party lines?" She and her late husband, Bill Markham, opened the area's first hardware store.

A Moreno Valley resident for 62 years, Mary Wheat and her husband, C.H. Wheat, both 82, still own their motorcycle business and still ride BMW bikes. Mary Wheat was a dress designer and worked in the school district as a teacher and librarian.

Stafford and her family left Rubidoux for Moreno Valley in 1956 for more breathing room. Bennie Stafford was the school district's librarian for 17 years.

Her husband, Sherman, opened the community's first Laundromat. The couple also indulged their passion, driving thousands of miles on national tours in the Model Ts they restored together.

Henry Tucker, 78, and his family sunk roots in Moreno Valley in 1957 where he launched his own tax service. Six years ago the Settlers landed him with this irresistible pitch: "Why don't you join us, because you've been elected co-president."

Anyone who wants to socialize with the Settlers is invited to the 35th annual picnic at noon June 19 at the Moreno Valley Senior Center, 25075 Fir Ave.

The club will provide ham, but guests must bring a dish to serve eight. "And we don't mean cottage cheese with canned peaches," Stafford joked. "Say Muriel said that."

Reach Laurie Lucas at 951-368-9569 or lucas@PE.com

IN BRIEF

MIRA LOMA

Jurupa district sets budget hearing

Directors of the Jurupa Community Services District on Monday are set to take public testimony on the district's draft 2010-11 fiscal year budget.

The proposed budget projects \$46.3 million in expenses, \$3 million more than the 2009-10 expenses.

Much of that increase stems from the increased costs of treating drinking water and sewer water.

Directors will meet at 7 p.m. at 11201 Harrel St.

Information: 951-685-7434.

—Sandra Stokley
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NORCO

Naval center works with university

The Naval Surface Warfare Center Corona in Norco signed the Navy's first education partnership agreement with the College of Engineering, Computer Science and Technology at Cal State Los Angeles during the college's senior design project expo June 4, the Navy announced.

The center, a field activity of Naval Sea Systems Command, sponsored two senior design projects at the university.

"We are proud to forge this new partnership to attract the best and brightest science and engineering talent for the Navy," NSWC Corona Commanding Officer Capt. Jay Kadowaki said in a news release. "This historic agreement allows us to tap into the next genera-

tion of engineering talent."

—Dayna Strahley
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RIVERSIDE

Alcohol may be factor in crash

Drunken driving was a possible factor in the death of a 42-year-old Riverside man who was killed Friday after the pickup truck he was driving hit two light poles in that city, police say.

The accident happened at 12:33 a.m. along Van Buren Boulevard near Alta Cresta Avenue. The 2007 Dodge truck was traveling east on Van Buren Boulevard when it hit the curb and then the poles.

"The driver was possibly driving under the influence of alcohol," Sgt. Phil Neglia said in a written statement.

Coroner's officials have released no information about the accident nor the victim's identity.

A female passenger in the truck complained of pain and was taken to Riverside Community Hospital for examination and observation.

Anyone with information on the wreck may call Detective Joe Avila at 951-353-7985.

—Richard Brooks
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