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Jacksonville, 31-20

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North Bay YMCA faces financial crisis

Budget woes could lead to center's closure

By CAROL BOGART
DAILY REPUBLIC

SUISUN CITY — Mike Hudson realizes what the future may hold for the North Bay YMCA if the center does not become more self-supporting. Hudson, chairman of the North Bay YMCA advisory board, said the center could be forced

to close.

Linda Griffith, vice president of risk management and legal affairs with the parent San Francisco YMCA, said closing the 12-year-old North Bay YMCA is "always an option" if the parent YMCA has to continue to shore up the North Bay YMCA's finances.

"With any operation, you want to

make it work financially," Griffith said.

Griffith said it costs \$1.6 million annually to operate the North Bay YMCA. The deficit for fiscal 2007-08 was \$530,000, she said, and the parent YMCA covered it.

This is not the first year the North Bay YMCA has operated in the red. To date, the parent YMCA has substi-

dized the costs of operating the North Bay YMCA by about \$3.9 million since 1995, Griffith said.

Membership fees are a key financial component for the North Bay YMCA, said Executive Director Rodney Chin, and membership is dwindling. In October, the parent YMCA gave the North Bay YMCA 90 days to come up with a plan to turn things around, Chin said.

"We've been given a tenuous re-

See YMCA, Back Page

YMCA MEMBERSHIP

A family membership at the North Bay YMCA is \$75 a month. A single membership for youths ages 8-17 is \$30 a month. To learn more about other membership plans, call 421-8746. Residents interested in serving on the North Bay YMCA advisory board can call board chairman Mike Hudson at 429-9794.

VARIETY IS SPICE OF FARMING life

Agricultural areas exemplify
Solano County's diversity



Hot summer days,
cool summer nights
and fertile soils
make Suisun Valley
ideal for vineyards.
Daily Republic file (2005)



Brad Zweerink/Daily Republic

Benjamin Gutierrez throws hay to sheep on Al Medvitz's 3,600-acre ranch in the Montezuma Hills. The Montezuma Hills are just one of nine diverse agricultural areas in Solano County.

A farm
worker,
below,
drives a
tractor
through
walnut
trees at
Sunrise
Orchard in
Vacaville.

Chris Jordan/
Daily Republic



By BARRY EBERLING
DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD — Craig McNamara grows walnuts on hot, flat valley land near Putah Creek. Al Medvitz raises sheep on grassy, windswept hills near the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

These diverse operations have something in common — they're both in Solano County.

Diversity is the name of the game in the county's farm industry. Microclimates and topography create an array of unlikely places. Cattle can graze on foggy hills near Vallejo during the summer even as a Dixon farmer mops his brow amid 90-degree heat in his tomato field.

"No other California county has the access to the Bay, Delta, coastal range and to the soils of the Central Valley," said Kurt Richter of the UC Agricultural Issues Center.

Richter and Alvin Sokolow came up with the nine farming regions listed in their recently completed, county-commissioned agricultural study.

To tour the nine farm regions is to see

Solano County in all its diversity, with places so different they can feel like a world apart. Understanding the nine regions could help save and boost the county's \$243 million annual farm economy.

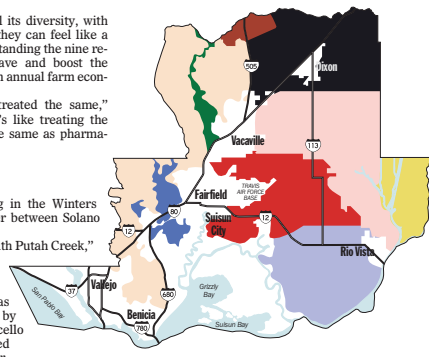
"They can't be treated the same," Richter said. "That's like treating the housing industry the same as pharmaceutical sales."

Winters

Walnuts are king in the Winters area near the border between Solano and Yolo counties.

"We're blessed with Putah Creek," said McNamara, who farms 450 acres.

Putah Creek was tamed 50 years ago by the massive Monticello Dam, which created Lake Berryessa reservoir. But prior to that, it raged during big



AGRICULTURAL REGIONS OF SOLANO COUNTY

■ Winters ■ Dixon Ridge ■ Montezuma Hills
□ Western grazing □ Elmina and Main Prairie □ Pleasant, Vaca and Lagoon valleys
■ Suisun and Green valleys ■ Jepson Prairie ■ Ryer Island

Source: UC Agricultural Issues Center

See Farming, Back Page

No money in budget, no time in prison

By DON THOMPSON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SACRAMENTO — Car thieves, forgers, scam artists, drunken drivers and some drug dealers might never serve a day in prison — even for repeat crimes — under Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposals to reduce California's inmate and parolee population, corrections department and law enforcement officials said.

It's one of the many potential consequences of abruptly upending the prison system to save a projected \$400 million in corrections department costs over the next 18 months.

Schwarzenegger is asking state lawmakers to approve releasing nonviolent, non-serious, non-sex offenders from prison if they have less than 20 months remaining on their sentences. It's part of the plan he announced Thursday to pare a \$14.5 billion state budget deficit.

Those offenders would be released on "summary parole," where they would be subject to searches and drug tests but would not be under parole officers' supervision. They could be sent back to prison only if they were convicted of new crimes, not for routine parole violations.

The proposals would apply to new convicts as well as to current prisoners, said James Tilton, secretary of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

"There is going to be a population that does not spend one day in prison," corrections spokesman Oscar Hidalgo said.

The department said those convicted of drug offenses, drunken driving, white collar or property crimes such as vehicle theft, grand theft or receiving stolen property likely would serve little or no time.

Prosecutors said those crimes typically bring sentences of 16 months, two years or three years in prison, depending on the circumstances. The defendants may serve time in county jail while they await trial, but would not be sent to state prison after their conviction.

"You rip people off, and prison is no longer an option. That's not good public policy," objected Vacaville Police Chief Richard Word, president of the California Police Chiefs Association.

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WEATHER



Mostly sunny skies today. Look for a high of 56 and a low of 36. Page B8

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

MONDAY

North Bay YIMCA Support Group 2-4 p.m. Monday, in the upstairs vision problems such as macular degeneration, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 1600 Union Ave., Fairfield. Info: 425-5405.

COMING UP

Terrific Tuesdays 3:30 p.m., Tuesday.

Prison: No

From Page One

Nearly 40,000 criminals were sent to prison last year for non-serious, nonviolent offenses. However, some would be excluded from early release because of their criminal history or because of their behavior in prison, the corrections department said.

"As far as I'm concerned, this entire program is an act of insanity," said Kern County District Attorney Edward Weigert. "They're less time sent to a local jail. The message will get very strongly to the criminal community that, except for a crime of violence, you have nothing to fear."

Is sending criminals to local jails is most expensive, because most are so crowded that inmates serve a fraction of their sentences, Jagels said.

"I'd say, 'Send me to prison,' knowing I'm never going to serve a day," said Ryan Thurman, spokesman at Peace Officers Association, which represents prison guards and parole agents.

Schwarzenegger's plan would eliminate about 4,500 guard positions. Because of vacancies and attrition, Thurman said, the program's safeguards might eventually be laid off.

Releasing long-term inmates a few months early will not boost California's crime rate, based on the experience of 13 other jurisdictions in the state released Thursday by a study released Thursday by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency.

"The research is overwhelming that you can do this without endangering public safety," said Barry Krisberg, based on research conducted by the state's parole board.

"If people start trying to terrorize the community that there's going to be a crime wave, that's not going to happen."

Yet Krisberg is among those who worry that convicts released early will be a problem who will not have adequate rehabilitation programs or the support they need to re-enter society.

"The state is basically saying, 'Good luck, and we hope you don't kill anybody,'" said John F. DeLoach, executive director of the Doris Fate Crime Victims Bureau, based in Sacramento.

Releasing enough inmates to free up 22,000 prison beds next year, as Schwarzenegger proposes, also could trigger prison and jail building programs approved by lawmakers and signed by the governor last year.

California Lottery

SuperLotto Plus/Saturday
Numbers picked
1, 10, 23, 41, 43
MegaNumber
Saturday's jackpot estimate (drawing 7:57 p.m.) \$35.8M

Daily 3/Saturday
Afternoon numbers picked: 6, 3, 7
Night numbers picked: 5, 9, 8
MegaBall: 10

Friday 5/Saturday
Numbers to play: 17, 18, 19, 27
MegaBall: 10

Daily Derby/Saturday
1st place: 3, hot shirt
2nd place: 12, Lady Dames
3rd place: 10, Solid Gold
Race time: 1:45:06
MegaBall: 10

On the Web: www.calottery.com

The Fairfield Circadia Library will have activities for children ages 5 and older, 5:00 Business Center Drive, Fairfield. Info: 784-2880.

Baby Bounce 10 a.m. and 11 a.m., Tuesday, Songs, stories and finger plays for infants to 18 months, Fairfield Circadia Library.

5:00 Business Center Drive, Fairfield. Info: 784-2880.

Pushed Story Time 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, Preschool story time with a

free, songs and crafts, Fairfield City Center Library, 1150 Kentucky St., Fairfield. Info: 438-3065.

ICD Lecture 5:07 p.m. Wednesday, A free lecture for people who are living with or may be receiving an implantable cardiac defibrillator (ICD) at the Hilton Garden Inn. The lecture is free, but seating is limited. The lecture is part of the NorthBay Healthcare Advanced Medicine Lecture Series, 220 Gateway Court, Fairfield. Info: 438-3500.

Scarlet Brigade Band Fundraiser All day, Wednesday, The Fairfield High School Scarlet Brigade Band will hold a fund-raiser for the band. The band will present a play when playing for their meals. Red Robin will donate 20 percent of the bill to the school's band program. To volunteer the first

YMCA: More members are needed

From Page One

the North Bay YMCA. Chin said 1,700 paid memberships would be enough to support the North Bay YMCA, but current membership is at most 1,100.

One source of funding for the North Bay YMCA is its annual community support campaign. The campaign has raised \$28,000 toward its \$33,000 goal. Chin said that its schools are on spring break. This year, "Splash" will be sponsored by the Kiwanis Club in Fairfield, Chin said.

Service organizations are "helping us step up to help the kids," Chin said. YMCA will be in deficit, Chin added.

The Jr. NBA is one of the best examples of urban services programs offered by the North Bay YMCA, Chin said. The program is aimed at youth ages 5-14. John Longenecker, Derrick Johnson and other coaches said kids come in here with no discipline, some under the wrong influences. At the Y, we get to know the kids on a personal level. Most kids want to please.

Chin said the parent program director, Deon Mason, 13, said he comes to the North Bay YMCA every week to try to "sneak in," he said. The North Bay YMCA is located at 586 E. Wigdon Way in Suisun City and is open to all residents of Solano County.

Two years ago, the North Bay YMCA had few programs for urban youths, Chin said. The new Teen Center, scheduled to open later this month

can't change crops from year to year. Dixon Ridge farmers can switch among wheat, alfalfa and corn. Producers also have also got plenty of Lake Berryessa reservoir water for irrigation.

But the soils are heavier and less fertile. The region has its own farming strengths. Many farmers grow alfalfa, corn and wheat, and ship it to dairies elsewhere in the Central Valley.

"Hot days and cool nights and the Delta breeze produce high-quality feed stuff for dairy cows," Richter said. Having a dairy locate there to use the alfalfa, corn and wheat would boost the area's economy, Richter said. He said dairies "process plants."

But proposals for large dairies have caused controversy in Solano County. Opponents say the dairies cause air pollution and other starch that can drift into cities.

Western Hills

The hills that separate Solano and Napa counties are used for cattle grazing.

Jopson Prairie

Sheep and cattle graze in the Central Valley area near Hills, Jopson Prairie. The hills that separate Solano County that has no fear of being annexed by a city for subdivisions. But its remoteness also adds to transportation costs because farm production must be moved using narrow-gauge rail to the Yolo County area.

"Farmers are smart. They've got it figured out," Richter said.

Dixon Ridge

Dixon Ridge has a combination of good soils, climate, access to water and large parcels that allow farmers to adapt to market conditions, Richter said.

"That makes it one of Solano County's most important farming areas."

6 to 10 p.m. Wednesday, 1350 Highway 220 Gateway Court, Fairfield. Info: 438-3500.

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Melvin Mason and Deon West play basketball at the North Bay YMCA in Suisun City on Thursday night.

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Farming: Microclimates, topography create variety of spaces

From Page One

winter storms, spilling its banks and flooding acre upon acre. The region's history is behind rich, loamy soils, Mr. Namdar said. The creek today provides water for farms and feeds into aquifers, he said.

Winters-region farming produces \$13 million annually, 7 percent of the county's annual total. But that relative mood, state in part because the region tops Solano County in per-acre annual value at about \$2,000.

A problem in the region is growing encroachment from rural residential homes, Richter said.

Montezuma Hills

McDevitt and his wife, Jeanne McCormack, raise sheep and grow grains on more than 3,600 acres near Rio Vista and the Sacramento River.

"It's really grassland," McDevitt said. "It's not like the oak woodlands of the Central Valley of eastern Solano. There's not a lot of surface irrigation water. It's pretty expensive to pump water from the river into the hills."

Montezuma Hills farmers have had to find their own niche in the county's agricultural farming area, with much of the water used falling as rain. Helping farmers survive economically are huge, electric generating wind turbines and natural gas fields, which are compatible with farming. Some farmers have brought them extra income. But the falling dollar and

Pleasants, Yaca and Lagoon Valleys

Rose Lovell-Sale grew up in Pleasants Valley near Yaca and can remember the old days.

"When I was young, it was all stone fruits and walnuts a very quiet, out-of-the-way place."

Most of the farming in big orchards like rose, Lovell-Sale says these days sees more big houses on 20 acres and more listed. Both types of land are changed in these coastal hills. Interstate 80, mayor bet, cuts through the Dixon Ridge.

Ryer Island

Ryer Island is so far removed from the hustle and bustle of modern life that the only Solano County access is by using the Real McCoy ferry.

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Island is a few miles from the Delta on Highway 84. Lovell-Sale and the waters of Miner and Steamboat sloughs from a 24,000-acre area planted with wheat, corn, pears and tomatoes.

"It's closer to the Dixon Ridge area than farming due to this is one farming area in Solano County that has no fear of being annexed by a city for subdivisions. But its remoteness also adds to transportation costs because farm production must be moved using narrow-gauge rail to the Yolo County area."

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