

Our Neighbors: Pals' turn on the hardwood a boost to Richmond nonprofits

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West Contra Costa school district board member Tony Thurmond was looking for something a little more competitive than the usual sports-related fundraiser, and he got just that Saturday at the Richmond Police Activities gymnasium.

Instead of heading out to the golf links, local elected officials and administrators squared off on the basketball court to benefit RPAL and the shelter run by the Greater Richmond Interfaith Program.

The end result was that Team RPAL edged out Team GRIP, but the true winners were the two nonprofit organizations. As of Tuesday, \$15,000 in donations had been raised, with \$7,000 going to RPAL and \$8,000 going to GRIP.

It was all in fun, but politicians — including council members from Richmond, San Pablo and El Cerrito — couldn't hold back their competitive nature at times, Thurmond said, noting that county Supervisor John Gioia and Richmond City Councilman Jim Rogers each nailed three-pointers, and Councilman Tom Butt was diving for loose balls.

"Everybody got to play, and the game was actually competitive. It went down to the wire," Thurmond said, noting that officials who may have differences on policy issues can work together as teammates.

There may have been some sore muscles the next day, but, "Nobody got hurt," Thurmond said. "We appreciated having a doctor in the house in (Councilman) Jeff Ritterman, but he wasn't needed."

About 100 people attended and brought donations of nonperishable food or new toys that will be donated to GRIP, said Richmond police Cpl. Larry Lewis, executive director of RPAL.

Event sponsors included DP Security, Sims Metal, Seville Group, Mechanics Bank, Orton Development, Bay Cities Paving and Grading, Richmond Police Officers Association, Davillier-Sloan Inc., Upstream Development, Comcast, Levin-Richmond Terminal Corp., Veolia Water, Richard Poe, WLC Architects, Ghilotti Bros. Inc. and the Westly Group.

"We're really pleased at support that was at such a high level, especially with the economy being what it is," Thurmond said.