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Diablo Regional Arts Association

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Lesher Center for the Arts Breaks Ground on Outdoor Plaza Enhancement Project

The new Rudney Plaza will provide updated outdoor programming capabilities by next summer

WALNUT CREEK, CA, November 6, 2019 – Community members, elected officials, and private donors gathered at the Lesher Center for the Arts to celebrate the groundbreaking of the new Rudney Plaza. Located outside the Lesher Center at the corner of Locust Street and Civic Drive, this enhancement project is the culmination of five years of planning and partnership between the City of Walnut Creek and the Diablo Regional Arts Association (DRAA). Transforming the programming potential of the outdoor space adjacent to the building, which celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2020, the community can expect enhanced accessibility and a state-of-the-art space for entertainment, a community gathering spot, and a home for both new and long-cherished programs.

“[The Lesher Center for the Arts] has become a cornerstone of not only our community, but the entire East Bay. It is a cornerstone for the arts, it is a cornerstone for our local economy, and it is a cornerstone for the quality of life in this community,” Walnut Creek Mayor Cindy Silva said to the crowd gathered at the ceremony. “Everything we do in partnership with the Diablo Regional Arts Association and their board and supporters to sustain and maintain the Lesher Center is truly important.” The Rudney Plaza will create an innovative fourth stage at the regional arts center, which currently serves over 350,000 people from across the Bay Area, by bringing the entertainment inside the center out in front of the public.



“This plaza enhancement project is happening because of the generosity of the DRAA Board of Directors, William Sweet and the Kerr Foundation, the City of Walnut Creek, and because of the vision and philanthropy of Eric Rudney,” states DRAA Executive Director, Peggy White. *“Eric’s enthusiasm for the arts and the future of our wonderful Center is unwavering. His history of generosity, over two decades of significant gifts, is inspiring.”*

This plaza, originally the vision of current Board Member and former President of Diablo Regional Arts Association Eric Rudney, signifies the successful public-private partnership between the City of Walnut Creek, Diablo Regional Arts Association, and the Leshner Center for the Arts. With a goal of making this a vibrant public plaza to enjoy all that the arts have to offer, the expanded plaza will increase the usable space by 65%, while also improving safety and comfort. The Rudney Plaza will host everything from movie nights, lunchtime concerts, and art installations to festivals, food carts, and sneak previews of current and upcoming productions. Director of Walnut Creek's Arts and Recreation Kevin Safine, stated "When a few people who are committed have a big idea, things like this happen." With a milestone anniversary on the horizon, the creation of this versatile attraction further strengthens Walnut Creek's position as the regional destination for arts, cultural experiences, and entertainment.

Groundbreaking took place on Tuesday, November 5, 2019. The Leshner Center will remain open for regular programming while construction on the plaza occurs. The Rudney Plaza is expected to be complete by June 2020, in time for the annual Chevron Family Theatre Festival on Saturday, July 18, 2020.

Diablo Regional Arts Association (DRAA) is the nonprofit partner of the Leshner Center for the Arts. With a mission of enriching the lives of thousands of East Bay residents every year, DRAA raises funds to support the full spectrum of arts at the Leshner Center including drama, musical theatre, dance, music, and the visual arts. In addition, through its Arts Access School Time Program, DRAA is dedicated to providing families, children, educators and underserved or at-risk individuals the opportunity to experience the arts. Learn more at www.draa.org.

Leshner Center for the Arts is located in Walnut Creek, California, and is known across the region as the premier destination for exceptional arts and entertainment experiences. First opened in October 1990, the Center now presents more than 900 productions and events each year, serving more than 350,000 patrons. The Center is owned and operated by the City of Walnut Creek. Learn more and see upcoming productions at www.lesherARTScenter.org.