

Jobs and the environment celebrated at Live Oak center

By JASON HOPPIN - Santa Cruz Sentinel

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LIVE OAK - With the Live Oak Family Resource Center recently receiving the highest stamp of approval for energy efficiency, a group of elected leaders and labor and environmental activists gathered there Wednesday to make a pitch for jobs.

The Family Resource Center carries a "platinum" rating and is the 10,000th commercial building to be certified by the U.S. Green Building Council.

With the labor market stagnating, attendees pushed for government investments in green energy - though run by Community Bridges, the center was built using county funds - to help foster the creation of blue-collar jobs.

"This is a good example of a community coming together and saying, we've got to do this right," said Cesar Lara, executive director of the Monterey Bay Central Labor Council. "If we're going to solve a problem, we're going to come together, we're going to figure out possible solutions and we're going to act on those solutions, and we're going to engage government and ask for help."

Rep. Sam Farr, D-Carmel, was also on hand, praising the building as a fine example of the kind of forward-thinking project needed to lift the United States out of its doldrums. Afterward, Farr said he didn't want to see Congress abandon job-creation efforts after President Barack Obama's jobs bill was defeated last week.

"You don't give up because you've got a bunch of naysayers and flat-earth people that don't want

to do anything," Farr said. "Republicans in the majority haven't brought one jobs bill to the floor. They don't think that's the agenda of America. They think the agenda is to cut, squeeze and trim everything."

Also attending was Supervisor John Leopold, who represents Live Oak as well as the Blue-Green Alliance, a coalition of labor and environmental groups that have sometimes been at odds over the years.

Started in Minnesota, the Blue-Green Alliance recently merged with the Apollo Alliance, expanding Blue-Green's reach to 20 states, including California. Lisa Hoyos, Blue-Green's state director, noted that 40 percent of greenhouse gases come from energy used for buildings.

"We know that one the fastest and smartest ways to lay a strong economic and environmental foundation for the 21st century is through sustainable buildings," Hoyos said.

The center is a model of environmentally friendly design, with a permeable parking lot allowing rainwater to percolate into the ground, cork floors, energy-efficient windows and natural breezes to cool it. Its monthly energy bills are no more than \$40, and it even expects to generate

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\$11,000 over the next five years by selling excess energy from rooftop solar panels.

"To me, it represents what is best in Santa Cruz, which is local people partnering together, protecting the environment, and promoting resiliency so we can weather whatever storm's going to come our way," Leopold said.

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