

Lesher Foundation gives \$1 million for new Walnut Creek library

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The Dean and Margaret Lesher Foundation has pledged \$1 million toward the construction of a new downtown Walnut Creek library.

The gift is the first major donation to the Walnut Creek Library Foundation, which has launched a \$5 million capital campaign to help pay for construction of a \$46 million library and underground parking garage, board president Edward Del Beccaro said today.

The announcement came on the heels of a Walnut Creek City Council decision Tuesday to allow various portions of the two-story, 42,000-square-foot library to be named in honor of donors. The children's area of the library will be named the "Lesher Foundation Children's Wing and Garden."

The Lesher Foundation gift is the largest grant the nonprofit organization has given to a library in Contra Costa County. The foundation previously awarded \$750,000 to the Orinda library, \$500,000 to the Lafayette library and \$100,000 to provide computers, books and equipment for the Juvenile Hall library in Martinez.

"Libraries have been a focus for us and we have a strong history and heritage in the community of Walnut Creek," said Steve Lesher, foundation board member and grandson of Dean Lesher. "It's really a cornerstone gift. It's something that will provide hopefully a legacy for years to come of lifelong learning, an intellectual hub, and be a nice nexus with all of the arts and cultural programming already in the city."

The library foundation expects to meet its capital campaign goal before construction is completed in April 2010, Del Beccaro said. The foundation also hopes to raise at least \$5 million for an endowment to fund programs at the downtown and Ygnacio Valley branch libraries.

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