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Pizarro: Mayfair Community Center a point of pride for once-troubled neighborhood

By Sal Pizarro
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With today's opening of the new Mayfair Community Center, the neighborhood that used to be known as "Sal Si Puedes" — get out if you can — has a real monument to its growth as a community.

While the area can pride itself for being the childhood home of Cesar Chavez, for decades it was such a haven for crime and drugs that it became a truly dangerous place to live.

But committed people can make a difference, and they sure have in Mayfair.

The 22,000-square-foot center at Kammerer Avenue is the centerpiece of improvements made to Mayfair Park, which also include a skateboard park, art and a swimming pool (though it seems still a bit chilly to try that out). The center has classrooms, a banquet hall, a computer lab and a reading area.

"The community center represents a wish we have had for a long time," said Guadalupe Gonzales, chair of the Mayfair Neighborhood Action Coalition. "There are going to be a lot of resources and a lot of services."

The funding largely came from the San Jose Redevelopment Agency, but the drive was provided by the Mayfair Neighborhood Action Coalition,

which made the center a priority in its 2002 improvement plan.

When today's celebration starts at 10 a.m., the entire neighborhood can breathe a sigh after a job well done.

GOODBYE: I was sorry to hear that after 20 years at San Jose State University, Provost Carmen Sigler will be retiring at the end of the school year in May.

The Argentina native began her career in the department of foreign languages in 1987 and was appointed dean of the College of Humanities and Arts in 2000. She became provost in 2005, after a short stint as interim provost.

She's been a tireless advocate for students in her time at San Jose State and a real leader in the community, as board chair of the Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley.

CULTURAL MIX: Most people know that George Shirakawa Jr. has a multicultural family background, with both Asian and Latino roots. So it was very fitting for both San Jose Taiko and Mariachi San Jose to perform at the ceremony Thursday as he was sworn in as a member of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors.

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