



COUNTY OF YOLO

Office of the County Administrator

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Yolo Public Defender CARES Fundraiser

(Woodland, CA) – Yolo Public Defender Community Assistance & Re-Entry Support (CARES) will be hosting a fundraiser at MOD Pizza (2051 Bronze Star Dr, Suite 100 Woodland, CA 95776) on Friday, March 16th, 2023, in anticipation of National Public Defense Day.

Yolo Public Defender CARES is a nonprofit organization formed to partner with the Yolo County Public Defender's Office to help fill gaps in resources which are necessary to help support people impacted by the local criminal legal system. Aligned with the Public Defender's Office's mission to holistically meet indigent clients' needs outside of the courtroom, CARES aims to provide financial and tangible supports to justice-involved individuals, especially those who are re-entering their communities after a period of incarceration.

“Yolo Public Defender CARES recognizes that for community members who have encountered the criminal legal system, there are gaps in supports and resources that create barriers to their success,” said Yolo Public Defender CARES board member Benjamin Hernandez. “CARES hopes to address these barriers so they do not cause a ripple-effect of instability in people's lives.” In meeting community members' needs, Yolo Public Defender CARES further hopes to assist the Yolo County Public Defender's Office in disrupting cycles of incarceration.

Funds raised through these efforts will have a direct, positive impact on the lives of those re-entering their communities. For example, funds raised from MOD Pizza purchases can be used to assist indigent clients who are released from jail on weekends and need a ride home or who must wait to reinstate their food stamp benefits, leaving them without resources to purchase food for days. Funds can also pay for a person's transportation to court, their rent or utilities while being incarcerated, or essential prescription medications upon release. Through this fundraiser, Yolo Public Defender CARES will alleviate the tremendous struggles indigent community members face upon re-entry.

This fundraiser coincides with the landmark court decision in *Gideon vs. Wainwright* guaranteeing the right to counsel for all poor people. On March 18th, 1963, the United States Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the right of a poor person in a criminal trial to have the assistance of counsel is fundamental and essential to a fair trial. In recognition of the 60th Anniversary of *Gideon vs. Wainwright*, Chief Public Defender Tracie Olson will present a resolution to the Yolo County Board of Supervisors proclaiming March 18th, 2023, as “Public Defense Day” in Yolo County.

“Participating in this fundraiser is not only a great way to celebrate National Public Defense Day,” said Yolo Public Defender CARES board member Eliana Swerdlow, “but it's also an actionable step to help the most vulnerable among our community and in need of holistic support.”

From 11:00 AM-10:00 PM on March 16th, MOD Pizza customers can show the fundraiser flyer or mention the fundraiser at checkout, and 20% of their payment will go directly to Yolo Public Defender CARES. Customers ordering online can use the code MODGIVES20 at checkout.

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