

Guest commentary: Tackling some of Alameda County's issues together

By Wilma Chan, Oakland Tribune My Word

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In more than 25 years of public service, I have witnessed the many challenges of poverty in Alameda County. Our community struggles with a lack of affordable housing, the anxiety of not knowing where the next meal is coming from and the difficulty of finding quality childcare and living-wage jobs.

That is why two years ago I joined a coalition of local government, nonprofit and private sector leaders to declare a new war on poverty. The coalition, called All In -- Alameda County, works to end hunger, to increase economic empowerment and to guarantee an excellent foundation in life for our youngest residents.

We invite you to join us Saturday in the fight against poverty and hunger and take part in an exciting process. Alameda County will host its fifth annual Apps Challenge, a daylong community hackathon where there will be a place for everyone -- the civically active, the technologically gifted and those who simply want to get involved.

Alameda County Apps Challenge 2016 will bring members of our community together to work in teams to develop ideas for using technology to improve community well-being. This time, the event will focus on fighting poverty and eliminating hunger in our communities.

Alameda County Apps Challenge 2016 will take place from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday at the Alameda County Conference Center, 125 12th St., Suite 400, Oakland. To register, go to code.acgov.org.

These community-based hackathons have been very successful in the past. Four years ago, Alameda County launched our Apps Challenge hackathon series to strengthen ties with residents, broaden understanding of public services and emphasize government transparency.

Each of the events provided participants access to hundreds of datasets available through the Alameda County Data Sharing Initiative (data.acgov.org). The data is gathered through a wide range of activities performed by Alameda County government -- including public safety, environmental protection, transportation, public health and senior services.

More than 600 people turned out for our first four hackathons, generating nearly 100 creative ideas and 10 working apps that are making local services more effective and easier to access. Winning entries have included:

- The ACPR Finder app, which displays information about parks and recreation areas within the county and filters information by park features (trails, tennis courts, etc.).
- Ready.acgov.org, an online tool and mobile app that provides residents with an easy step-by-step approach to preparing for major emergencies.

I am extremely excited for this upcoming Apps Challenge. The event has enormous potential to bring a high level of innovative thinking and civic-minded passion to the All In -- Alameda County cause. Already, the ideas are percolating: apps to find ways to leverage mobile phone technology to recover surplus food from local restaurants and large events; and apps that would provide job placement and online banking services to low-income youth.

Surely our event will prompt many powerful ideas for expanding opportunities for everyone in Alameda County to be well-nourished, to prosper and to thrive.

Wilma Chan is Alameda County supervisor representing District 3, which includes the cities of Alameda, San Leandro, parts of Oakland, including the Chinatown, Jack London, Fruitvale and San Antonio neighborhoods, and the unincorporated community of San Lorenzo.

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