



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **CALIFORNIA FIRST LADY MARIA SHRIVER PRAISES LOCAL EFFORTS TO EMPOWER GIRLS IN VISIT TO ALAMEDA COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTER**

California First Lady Maria Shriver voiced strong support of local efforts to empower at-risk girls during a visit and discussion with young female wards today at the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center in San Leandro.

Shriver's visit was to specifically learn about the Minerva Quilts Project, in which girls incarcerated at the Juvenile Justice Center quilted their own artistic interpretations of Minerva – the Roman Goddess whose image adorns the California State Seal. In making their quilts, the girls attempted to visually express Minerva's qualities of courage, strength and wisdom. The project, conducted through the Alameda County Arts Education Program, encouraged the young teens to think about these traits in themselves while designing their art pieces.

Speaking to 20 of the young artists inside the Center, Shriver said, "I'm so excited about this project. I'm very hopeful it will help you to visualize the kind of women you want to be. The thing I like about Minerva is that she can be depicted in so many ways – strong and sensitive, compassionate and sassy. Minerva teaches us that there are times when you have to be a warrior and there are times when you want to take off your helmet and be a different kind of woman."

It was Shriver who first developed the idea of contemporary artist interpretations of Minerva. The Quilts Project began at the Juvenile Justice Center in 2008 through a partnership involving the California Arts Council and the Alameda County Arts Commission. In 2008 and 2009 the quilts were prominently displayed at two Conferences on Women that Shriver co-hosted with her husband, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. Many of the quilts still are on display at the California Museum in Sacramento, and more quilts created recently in Alameda County were added to the display today.

Shriver has also championed the Minerva Awards program for the past several years honoring outstanding women from throughout California for their achievements. Her visit to San Leandro came one day before an event at Sacramento's California Museum that will honor Minerva Award winners and the Minerva Quilts Project. Four of the young artists who met with Shriver in San Leandro today will be honored guests at the event on Thursday in Sacramento.

Shriver also toured the Juvenile Justice Center with top local officials — including County Administrator Susan S. Muranishi, Supervisors Keith Carson and Gail Steele, District Attorney Nancy O'Malley and Superior Court Judge Trina Thompson Stanley — and praised the County's ongoing efforts to help young people. Muranishi said the Minerva Quilts Project and the Arts Education Program reflect Alameda County's commitment to helping at-risk youth.

"The Minerva Quilts project is a great example of the efforts Alameda County is making to help at-risk youth find positive role models, develop new skills and empower themselves to move their lives in positive directions," Muranishi said.

As part of her tour, Shriver visited the Fresh Start Café, a small coffee shop inside the Juvenile Justice Center that employs youth formerly in the Juvenile Justice system, providing these young people hands-on job experience. This innovative enterprise is part of a broader Alameda County effort called New Beginnings that provides paid employment, job skills, vocational training and mentorship to youth from the juvenile justice and foster care systems in hopes that such opportunities will help these young people make the transition to productive lives as adults.