



City of Yakima

# NEWS RELEASE

Subject: Miller Park Community Center Improvement Project  
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## **Washington Fruit Funding Will Help Refurbish Aging Community Center**

Washington Fruit and Produce, Co., one of the pioneers of the Yakima Valley's agriculture industry, has pledged substantial funding over the next five years to refurbish a building that currently houses programs provided by the City of Yakima's Gang Free Initiative ("GFI") and the Yakima Police Activities League ("YPAL").

At a news conference on Tuesday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, it was announced that Washington Fruit will provide \$50,000 each of the next five years to upgrade the building located at 602 N. 4<sup>th</sup> Street. It was also announced at the news conference that the building, which has been known as the Miller Park Community Center for the last several years, will be renamed the Washington Fruit Community Center.

The City of Yakima will match Washington Fruit's contribution, which means a total of \$500,000 will be invested in the facility to make it better suited to its current and future uses.

Improvements that will be made to the building, which will take place in phases, include new windows, lighting, and other energy efficiency upgrades, renovated classrooms, rebuilt restrooms, a refurbished kitchen and a new dining space, enhanced communications capabilities, and changes that will make the building compliant with ADA requirements.

Originally built in the 1970s as Yakima's Senior Center, the building is now used by both YPAL and as the GFI's Northeast Yakima Youth and Family Development Center. A variety of programs and activities are offered through the facility that specifically target at-risk kids, providing them with skills to help them be successful. The improvements that will be made to the building thanks to Washington Fruit's contribution will allow GFI and YPAL programs and activities to provide even greater benefits to the community.

Being able to help upgrade the aging building struck a cord with Washington Fruit executives since many of the company's employees live in the neighborhoods that surround the community center.

"The men and women who work for Washington Fruit are truly the backbone of the company," said Hanses. "Whenever an opportunity comes along to improve the lives of our employees and their families, we take advantage of it. Being able to contribute to refurbishing the community center is something Washington Fruit is proud to do," said Hanses.

Founded nearly 100 years ago by Fred Plath, Washington Fruit, which has grown to become a prominent grower, packer, and shipper of produce and a major Yakima employer, has a long history of supporting a variety of local charitable organizations.

"Yakima is blessed to have wonderful corporate partners like Washington Fruit who generously fund programs and services that help make our community better," said O'Rourke. "The City is grateful that Washington Fruit has made a long term commitment to enhancing the community center so that it can continue to serve kids and families for many years to come."

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