

OFFICIAL GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY FOR \$23M BIG WAVE PROJECT IN SAN MATEO COUNTY

Parents of adult children with special needs celebrate the Big Wave Project, a long-awaited home and community facility, one of only six in the U.S.

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Half Moon Bay, CA - Dozens with masks gathered this morning on the Half Moon Bay coast, in El Granada, CA, to celebrate the groundbreaking of the [Big Wave](#) Project, a 20-year effort to build a \$23 million dollar affordable living community for adults with special needs. Since the year 2000, when the Bay Area saw a significant jump in cases of autism and other developmental disabilities, the numbers of adults who will need affordable housing has climbed significantly. The CDC estimates that one in 54 U.S. adults has autism.

Government officials stood alongside private companies with dozens of adults with disabilities and their families.

The project, which will provide not only safe housing, but a variety of jobs, and a peer community for adults with special needs, will allow local businesses on the adjacent property to employ and support adults with autism and other developmental disabilities so that they can experience the dignity of work and the support of their peers in a specifically-designed housing complex built for their needs.

“The question *where will they go?* is both a serious and logical one,” says Jeff Peck, CEO of the Big Wave Project. “Our parents are in their 60s and 70s. The number of adults with special needs is growing. Our current system, which does not provide community for these vulnerable and often lonely human beings, will soon be overwhelmed without a creative initiative such as this.”

Experts estimate that people with developmental disabilities have an unemployment rate of 87 percent. Many of them believe that adults with special needs can and even need to work. Big Wave will now contract with local employers to pay these adults a living wage. In addition, Big Wave provides peer support by contracting with local organizations who provide day programs for adults with special needs.

“My daughter Sarah will be able to work and learn on site at the culinary academy, flower shop or any other local business or training facility. It will help her feel useful and fulfilled. But what is most exciting is that now she will be able to live and interact with her peers,” says Jeanne Carlson, a Woodside resident. “I can finally relax knowing that she will be cared for throughout her adult life in a meaningful way.”

Adults with special needs includes Autism, Aspergers, Williams Syndrome, Brain Injury, Cerebral Palsy, Deafness, Downs Syndrome, Medically Fragile, Syndrome X, Speech/Apraxia and other Intellectual/Cognitive Disabilities.

The Big Wave Project estimates it will begin construction on September 1, 2020. “Big Wave is a community-driven project for our most vulnerable adults,” said San Mateo county supervisor Dave Pine. “These families have come together with the community to achieve what many thought was impossible. We are inspired by what they accomplished.”

For the last 20 years its principals have spent \$23 million and followed the legal path to approval after approval, including meeting all environmental regulations. Half Moon Bay area residents acknowledged the support they have received from County officials as The Big Wave Project model met its requirements.

“Today, we look beyond this field and this farm and we see a new community with 43 adults and families realizing a dream after 20-years of hard work and unbreakable hope,” said Pine. “This community will be a unique asset to the county, providing a stable model of housing and the services these adults need. And the very special residents who will live there will continue to teach us about love, compassion, dignity and the resilience of the human spirit.”

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About the Big Wave Project

The Big Wave Project provides the venue and family support for adults with special needs, as well as ensuring that they have affordable housing, job and career opportunities, as well as emotional support, by contracting with organizations that have a proven record of innovative programs. These programs incorporate vocational, residential, and peer support in a comprehensive and nurturing environment to help each person achieve new skills and confidence, ensuring local families the best chance of success for their adult children. The new Big Wave property is scheduled to open in the Fall of 2021. Visit bigwaveproject.org to learn more.