

Anti-violence center opens

Governor attends site dedication

By Robert S. Hong, Staff Writer
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PASADENA - Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger swung into the Pasadena on Tuesday to help inaugurate the headquarters of an anti-violence organization.

He also took the occasion to speak about the importance of violence prevention to a gathering of several hundred schoolchildren at the Ambassador Auditorium.

The Western Justice Center Foundation, which works to combat violence and resolve conflicts in the community, recently refurbished its headquarters and conference center building at 55 S. Grand Ave. Officials invited local students and guests to attend the dedication.

Schwarzenegger congratulated foundation officials and referred to the renovated building as "a living monument to our highest ideals."

Commending the foundation's mission to combat violence, the governor spoke about the need to instill love, inclusion and tolerance in youths at an early age, particularly among those at high risk of joining gangs.

"We all know of the devastation and the violence that they create," he said of gangs. "There are so many things that we all can do to get in there early on."

The Western Justice Center campus also houses 17 other

nonprofit organizations.

"We are celebrating both our mission and also the completion of our headquarters building which is the fourth of four buildings that have been renovated and become our campus," said foundation President Walter Cochran-Bond.

Schwarzenegger stressed that providing opportunities for youths is key to preventing violence. He said the state needs more facilities like the Western Justice Center, which the governor said can promote peace in the way gymnasiums promote health, he said.

"The reason people get fit today is because there's a health club everywhere," Schwarzenegger said. "We have to have centers all over town, and we have to have them in every town, because that's how we spread the great news and the great word of tolerance and inclusion and love."

Foundation Executive Director Najeeba Syeed-Miller said the governor's words were in line with the goals of her organization.

"I think his message was very consistent with our notion of prevention," she said. "One of the things we believe in very strongly is prevention and early intervention."

And the ideas presented struck a chord with students in attendance as well.

"I think its a very good concept," said Maranatha High School sophomore Michelle Washington, 15. "I think we should learn to be more loving and more tolerant of others."