



## **LWVGLC Unit Meeting Education Study Committee Session: It Takes a Community ...**

### **Topic: The Role of the Business Community**

*Presented by Erika Graf-Webster*

#### **General Information (Source: Superintendent Rounds)**

##### **Schools Impact Community**

- Schools provide workforce for fast food restaurants, grocery stores
- Students generally work for minimum wage
- Superintendent Rounds works with local businesses to create incentives for students
  - Students get raises for 3.0 GPA, regular class attendance

##### **Business Community Impacts Schools**

- Some company employees read to and tutor elementary students (no formal programs)
- School Advisory Boards include volunteers from business community
- Several efforts (most in planning stage, “Early College High School” operational) for business, schools, community coordination

#### **Business Involvement Specifics**

##### **International/National**

- Grant from Toyota promoting parental involvement – “The Toyota Literacy Project”, \$600,000 for 2009-2011 – see Sue Cain’s presentation, Unit Meeting 2.

##### **Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce**

- Has an Education Committee (Leslie Cervantes, LCPS Superintendent’s Liaison for Community Relations is member, also is Chamber’s First Vice-Chair)
- Helped create The Bridge of Southern New Mexico – a non-profit organization that “bridges the gap” between students and the needs of the local workforce. Two goals: (1) achieve highest high school graduation rate in the state by 2016, (2) optimize career and technical education opportunities for students to satisfy the needs of businesses in Dona Ana County.
  - Involved in development of Early College High School (opened in fall of 2010), a collaboration of High Schools, Dona Ana Community College, NMSU
- Partners with (1) Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance to identify workforce needs; (2) Building Community Capacity for Excellence in Education (BC<sup>2</sup>E<sup>2</sup>) to establish partnerships of business, school and community, and to develop processes for students, parents and community to take more ownership of education
- Annually recognizes a principal, teacher and “rookie” teacher for outstanding performance at a banquet

## **Hispano Chamber of Commerce**

- Works with middle schools – recognizes students for private or public service in the community
- Feels that there is a major disconnect between education and business, that there is a need to educate the local business community to take some responsibility
- Is on the Board of Directors for The Bridge of Southern New Mexico
- What the Hispano Chamber can do in the future: participate in mentorship program for students, promoting parental involvement, program to reduce drop-out rate, maybe modeled after “Pay Back” program in Clark County, NV (collaborative effort among schools, the University and the business community)
- *LWV Study Group assessment – their hearts are in the right place, but Hispano Chamber membership is small, financial resources are slim*

## **Local Businesses (Source: Leslie Cervantes, Superintendent's Liaison for Community Relations)**

- Hundreds of businesses support local schools. Some donate to foundations that support schools, some have one-on-one relationships with school principals.
- Most schools have more than one business partner – these arrangements are not formal, just have grown up over the years
- Some businesses adopt special projects, such as an anti-bullying campaign
- 70-80 businesses have come out to promote bond issues for school buildings and infrastructure
- Businesses buy supplies, lunches for staff
- Some schools, especially the high schools, show their business supporters on marquees in front of the school
- El Paso Electric and some of the local banks supports teacher grant programs for developing creative projects
- Las Cruces Farmers Insurance agents and Las Cruces Toyota have bought and donated cars for 3 years in a row to help fight the truancy problem. Students must have an at least 90% attendance record to qualify for the “Count Me In” Car Giveaway. Other prizes awarded for “Count Me In” is \$1,000 CD donated by First Light Federal Credit Union, computers, video cameras and gift cards donated by other businesses. School attendance has gone up considerably.
- Virtually all of the fairly large businesses are very generous to LCPS – El Paso Electric, the Banks, Kinko’s, Kohl’s, Sam’s Club, ...