



New Gang Prevention Effort in District 1

S.T.A.N.D.

Striving Toward Achievement with New Direction

In last month's newsletter, I shared with you that as a result of my annual school visits and meetings with District 1 principals I decided to sponsor 3rd grade field trips to City Hall after learning that at this grade level students begin to learn about government. (In case you missed this article the first time and would like to read about it now, click here: <http://sjdistrict1.com/newsletter/NewsletterArticles/2009-February-3rdGraders.pdf>) These meetings have again proven to be worthwhile as a new program benefiting middle school students is now being implemented at a local school.

During a visit to Monroe Middle School last year, I met with their then new principal, Dawnel Sonntag. Principal Sonntag expressed the school's need for effective and productive after-school activities, as students there seemed to be at risk to be lured by gangs. Although Monroe Middle School is physically located in District 6, it is in the Campbell Union School District and a majority of its students reside in District 1.

After learning about a youth development program that focuses on gang prevention and at-risk-youth that is funded by the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force (MGPTF), my office was able to match this possible solution with the identified need at the school. S.T.A.N.D., Striving Toward Achievement with New Direction, teaches youth, ages 11-18, the skills to successfully connect with their home, school and community, while becoming productive citizens. This program is a part of the City of San José's Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Community Services Division.

The S.T.A.N.D. program, which was first piloted in 2006 at several schools throughout the city, boasts an almost 80 percent success rate. A support network of program staff and school administrators, advisors and teachers help students (with disciplinary issues, peer conflicts, or those who may be in need of support services or displaying at-risk behaviors) tackle tough issues. This may be achieved with support groups, parent involvement or simply linking students and families to additional resources that may be available to them. As students and families begin to make positive progress, it builds self esteem and opens greater channels of communication which leads to safer schools and as a result community transformation.

Once it was determined that this program would be suitable for Monroe, we made the suggestion to the school. With full support from my office and enthusiastic acceptance by the school, S.T.A.N.D. is now being integrated on campus and students will be able to benefit from the new resource. “The S.T.A.N.D. Program is an asset to Monroe Middle School. Our students benefit from the personal contact and interventions the program offers. We are grateful for Councilman Constant’s desire to meet the many needs of our students,” stated Ted Cribari, III, Assistant Principal at the school.

Ironically, S.T.A.N.D. was originally slated to be implemented at the Starbird Youth Center, but because construction was not completed in time, the program was moved to the Alviso Youth Center in District 4.

Although District 1 has had its fair share of gang related activity in recent years, the MGPTF has had little visibility on the west side. Bringing the S.T.A.N.D. program to Moreland Middle School is a good step forward in terms of increasing anti-gang efforts in our area. The MGPTF is actively trying to increase their presence and support in our district and is making plans to meet with our leadership group to educate them on the services available.