

SB COUNTY SCHOOL UPDATE



Bill Cirone
Santa Barbara County
Superintendent of Schools

AmeriCorps Makes a Real Difference

■ I have long been an advocate of community service for young people. I believe it helps connect them with their communities and helps them see how good it can feel to work for the common good. For this reason, I strongly support the national service program, AmeriCorps, which is basically a domestic Peace Corps, and I am very pleased that the federal government has voted to expand its reach.

In our county, AmeriCorps volunteers help young people read and succeed in school. Literacy tutors help low-level readers in grades K-9 at 23 schools and six non-profit organizations countywide. Members also help with volunteer recruitment and disaster preparedness.

AmeriCorps volunteers come from all walks of life. Whether a retired person interested in giving back to the community or a college student considering a career in education, AmeriCorps members make a difference in local schools and in the lives of children.

Applications for individuals wishing to take part in the AmeriCorps program are now being accepted for the 2009-10 school year that begins this August. A website has been constructed for applicants at www.americorpstutors.org, including applications, reference forms, position descriptions, and other detailed program information.

Full-time members commit to a 1,700-hour term of service and serve 40 hours a week. Part-time members commit to a 900-hour term of service and serve for 25 hours a week. For their service, full-time AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance of \$13,600, an education award of \$4,725 (at completion of their term), and health and childcare benefits. Part-time members receive a \$7,200 living allowance and an education award of \$2,362.

Our Santa Barbara County Education Office AmeriCorps team has been extremely diverse over the last eight years. Some members have college degrees and use their education award

for graduate programs; others enroll in teaching credential programs after their service. Still others come out of retirement to serve. What they all have in common is a passion for making a difference in the lives of our young people in schools.

The program is administered by the CaliforniaVolunteers office and sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). CaliforniaVolunteers is the state office that manages programs and initiatives aimed at increasing the number of Californians engaged in service and volunteering (www.californiavolunteers.org).

Further information is available by contacting Tom Spadaro at the Santa Barbara County Education Office at 964-4710, ext. 4405 or americorps@sbceo.org.

I believe it is clear that this is a wonderful model for all involved, and I encourage all who are interested to find out more about this very valuable program. Together, we can all make a difference in the lives of local children. ■

Thank you from SMB School District

■ The generosity of local businesses, organizations and individuals to area schools is always impressive, but sometimes it's exceptionally amazing! The Santa Maria-Bonita School District has recently received some extremely generous donations.



In March, longtime local residents Dorothy and Mark Smith donated a new 2009 Dodge Caravan to the district's Special Education Department. The donation was made through the Smiths' charitable foundation. The district is greatly appreciative.

The van will be used for the severely handicapped students' community based instructional program. The program develops the

students' functional skills through field trips to local restaurants, grocery stores, drug stores, businesses and recreational facilities to foster independence at school and within the community. Nearly 50 severely handicapped students take these learning excursions around town during the year.

The success of the program relies on having safe and reliable transportation. For the past several years, the students have had to share vans with the district's maintenance department. The van that was replaced for student use thanks to the Smiths' donation was a 1989 mini-van that had seen better days and had a lot of mileage on it.

"We appreciate the Smiths' amazing donation," said Phil Alvarado, SMBSD superintendent. "Special Education does not receive sufficient funding from the state, so it's difficult for the district to find money for big-ticket items like a new van. The Smiths have shown that they consider children and education their top priorities. That kind of community support is phenomenal."

Next Day Signs donated lettering on the van to indicate that it was generously donated by the Dorothy and Mark Smith Foundation. The sign company also donated SMBSD logo decals for the van doors.

Earlier in the year, the Noontime Rotary Club of Santa Maria donated a dictionary to every third grade student in the district - nearly 1,600 books! The dictionaries are for the students to keep and use throughout their school career. The students received their dictionaries in February and March. They are fortunate to have a group like the Rotary Club of Santa Maria making a positive difference in their lives. Thank you, Noontime Rotary Club of Santa Maria for supporting schools!

Students in the Santa Maria-Bonita School District will have more access to technology thanks to a donation in March of 18 computers from GBP&B Tax and Business Advisors

through the Education Collaborative of the Society of Petroleum Engineers. The 18 Dell OptiPlex desktop computers were distributed to classrooms in the district after instructional software was loaded onto them.

GBP&B Tax and Business Advisors, an accounting firm with offices in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties, is a sponsor of the Education Collaborative. The Collaborative is the volunteer arm of the oil and gas industry which works to bring resources from the industry into Central Coast classrooms in the form of science, math and technology grants; contest proceeds; guest speakers and other support.

The Education Collaborative receives grant requests from teachers asking for additional classroom computers and updated technology equipment. Some of the grant requests are funded directly.

For other requests, the Education Collaborative goes to its sponsors and asks for donations of computers that are no longer being used due to business upgrades but are still new enough and with sufficient memory to be used by students for educational purposes. GBP&B Tax and Business Advisors responded to the appeal, and SMBSD was the fortunate recipient.

The efforts of the Education Collaborative to bring in partners like GBP&B Tax and Business Advisors to expand support to our schools is extremely helpful and important, especially now when we are trying to provide more technology resources for our students with less funding from the state," said SMBSD Superintendent Phil Alvarado.

"GBP&B Tax and Business Advisors' donation will help our students meet the demands of 21st century technology skills." ■

Tips for a Safe and Green Spring Cleaning

■ It's that time of year again...spring cleaning time! Before you break out the cleaning supplies take a few minutes to make sure you know how to properly handle and dispose of household products so that you keep your family safe.

Americans generate 1.6 million tons of waste each year from common household products with potentially hazardous ingredients. These products can include drain openers, oven cleaners, paint thinners, strippers, and removers,

grease and rust removers, and mold and mildew removers. Leftovers of these products often referred to as "household hazardous waste" (HHW) may contain corrosive, toxic, flammable, or reactive ingredients.

Improper disposal of household hazardous waste can include pouring them down the drain, on the ground, into storm sewers, or in some cases putting them out with the trash. The dangers of such disposal methods might not be immediately obvious, but improper disposal of these materials can pollute the environment or possibly harm your family. Many communities in the United States offer a variety of options for safely managing your HHW. Check with your local solid waste authority for collections in your area.

Here's what you can do to keep yourself, your family, and your environment safe while using these products during your spring cleaning:

1. Read and follow the label – before you buy, always check the product labels. It is important to look for labeling that reads "DANGER," "WARNING," "CAUTION,"

"TOXIC," "CORROSIVE," "FLAMMABLE," or "POISON." These warnings tell you if the product is harmful to you, your family and the environment, and how to use, store, and dispose of it safely.

2. Keep products in their original containers and store them safely away from children and pets.
3. Dispose of household products safely – never pour corrosive, toxic, flammable, or reactive household products down the sink, toilet, or bathtub drain unless the products are made for that purpose.
4. Try alternative products when available – for many everyday tasks, there are readily available products that can serve the same purpose, but that may be less harmful (and cheaper) alternatives. For example, mixing 1 tablespoon of vinegar or lemon juice in 1 quart of water makes for an excellent glass cleaner.

Call Mary Jacob PB & Associates for a FREE list of Foreclosed homes, or for a FREE Market Comparison on your home. 805.310.5430 ext. 222. ■

Join us for our

GRAND OPENING

THURSDAY, MAY 28, 2009
3:30-5:00
2450 PROFESSIONAL PARKWAY
SANTA MARIA

PathPoint of North Santa Barbara (formerly Work Training Programs) is celebrating our new location, our new elevator and our new name.

PathPoint is a nonprofit organization celebrating our 45th Anniversary. We offer various programs and services to individuals with disabilities and disadvantages within our communities. Please join us for an entertaining afternoon with food and beverages, door prizes, and always great company.

PLEASE RSVP BY
FRIDAY, MAY 22, 2009
805.934.3537 X101
OR E-MAIL
BETTY.BUTLER@PATHPOINT.ORG

PathPoint
A Nonprofit Organization

If you are unable to attend, but would like to make a donation please visit www.pathpoint.org