

# SCHOOL TIMES

SAN FRANCISCO  
SCHOOL  
VOLUNTEERS

The Newsletter of San Francisco School Volunteers

Winter 2008



**Mayor Gavin Newsom** encourages volunteerism in schools at the Marshall ES Beautification Day. He's using a Phonic Ear amplification system donated through School Volunteers. See related articles below and on page 5.

## MARSHALL ELEMENTARY BEAUTIFICATION DAY

In early September, a beautification day at **Marshall Elementary School** in the Mission District helped the school start the year off right with a clean coat of paint, a new mural, fresh plants in the courtyard, and an organized library, among many other projects. Our partners **SF Connect** and **Hands On Bay Area** worked with School Volunteers to recruit and put to work approximately 100 San Franciscans, most of whom had never before visited Marshall Elementary.

"The goal," said **Dariush Kayhan**, executive director of SF Connect, "is not only to get a lot of great work done, but also to build a community of folks that get involved with this school on an ongoing basis. Research shows that more parent and community participation results in

safer schools and higher test scores."

Mayor **Gavin Newsom** participated in the back-to-school event, helping to paint the fence and hang new basketball nets. A founding force behind SF Connect, Mayor Newsom believes in the importance of engaging community volunteers in schools. "To me it is one of the truly great no-brainers of all time. I can't imagine anything that's easier, more obvious, more sustainable, more compelling, more impactful, and more cost effective," he said.

Marshall Principal **Monica Guzman** said, "It's good to know that people care enough to help us. Most of the people here today aren't even from our neighborhood and don't know any of us. It's great to get the extra hands, because this work wouldn't get done otherwise. What a great way to start our school year."

(See related article on page 5.)

### Issues in Education

#### STUDENTS SHARE IDEAS TO CLOSE THE GAP

*San Francisco, like other urban school districts throughout the nation, is vexed with a systemic achievement gap between black and Latino students and their white and Asian American peers. Closing this gap is the number-one priority of new San Francisco Unified School District Superintendent Carlos Garcia. (See his guest article on back page.) How can a school volunteer be part of the solution? Just ask the students.*

Thousands of educators, policy-makers, and other committed Californians came together at the Achievement Gap Summit in Sacramento in November to explore why black and Latino students often do poorly in school.

Of the 125 panels held as part of the event, only one included students, and they may have had some of the most insightful feedback at the conference. The racially diverse group of seven students spent an hour telling professional educators and policymakers what works and does not work in their schools. Their solutions were profoundly simple and point to the ways community volunteers can help.

"If the room is quiet, I can work better," said Nyrysha, a 16-year-old junior.

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INSIDE:  
FOCUS ON  
PARTNERSHIP



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### MISSION STATEMENT:

San Francisco School Volunteers recruits, supports, and engages a community of volunteers who inspire public school students to achieve their full potential.

SFSV welcomes comments and feedback!  
Contact us at mail@sfsv.org or 415.749.3700.

As a child, I recall my grandmother gently reminding me that “many hands make light work,” and through my years of service, I have often seen how true this statement is. In fact, as we look to support our students and schools, I can find no better motto for our work together at San Francisco School Volunteers.



In this issue of *School Times*, you will see the work of “many hands”—of San Franciscans working together in partnership to make a difference. Our partnerships take many forms that include city-wide groups like SF Connect, the efforts of our Allies Program with corporate and community partners, and with individuals like Jill and Buzz Kramer. We also enjoy a very strong partnership with the San Francisco Unified School District and are delighted to forge a powerful relationship with our new

### Issues, continued from page 1

Another student added that if she wants to hear her teacher, she has to move away from the other students.

All seven students agreed that they need to have individual attention from teachers, but that academic help isn't always available.

“I can tell a teacher cares about me if I ask them a question and they'll help me out, and it's not like a big problem that I asked them,” said Imani, 17, a senior.

Clyde, another 17-year-old senior, said he knows teachers believe in him “when they give you words of encouragement instead of putting negative stuff in your face.”

Superintendent Carlos Garcia who has a guest column in this issue.

We have included an article that speaks to school reform from students' perspectives. I believe that this piece is reflective of a new area of partnership for us—one with our students themselves.

I would encourage you to listen carefully to our students as they have much to share, and in partnership with them, our work can have even greater impact. At School Volunteers, we will challenge ourselves to find new ways to work with and expand our partnership with students, and I hope that you can do the same.

Many thanks for our partnership with you and for being part of the “many hands” that makes the great work in schools happen.

All my best,

Every student said that hearing words of encouragement in the classroom is like magic. They also agreed that schools should do more to reach out to students who aren't the ones automatically participating in school activities.

According to the moderator of the student panel, Bonnie Benard of WestEd, a national education research agency based in San Francisco, students who succeeded in spite of major childhood obstacles often have three “protective factors” in place: at least one caring adult relationship, high expectations from people who believe in them, and the chance to give as well as receive.

# VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT



## THE CASE FOR A VOLUNTEER CONTINUUM

In order to meet the volunteer needs of all of San Francisco's public schools, School Volunteers—with its staff of 16 members—is moving from the position of guiding volunteers into service to an agency that is *guided by volunteers*. To accomplish this, we are providing more opportunities for volunteers to assume leadership roles and function as an extension of the professional staff.

Our current program provides volunteers with the tools they need to work with students and staff and become a respected part of the school community. As a result, teachers who have worked with a volunteer eagerly request more; volunteers want to continue their work in schools; and volunteers become our best recruiters, inviting their friends, neighbors and colleagues to get involved.

This model, known as a volunteer continuum, is used by national volunteer agencies such as the Girl Scouts of the USA and the American Red Cross. These agencies have successfully increased their impact by creating a structured organization in which volunteers gradually assume more responsibilities and become leaders of other volunteers.



John Weidinger (right), lead volunteer at Cleveland Elementary, with Cleveland teacher Isabel Ebert.

But this success can be a double-edged sword. How can we manage this ever-expanding community of volunteers without increasing our staff roster and potentially busting our budget? The answer is clear – we will create a volunteer continuum – that motivates volunteers to take on leadership roles so that School Volunteers can grow exponentially and keep its costs low.

To make this happen, our first step is to recruit lead volunteers who will manage a group of volunteers at a school site, introducing new volunteers to a school community and keeping them motivated. To support our lead volunteers, we are creating a forum in which they can share best practices with one another and enhance their people management skills.

Engaging volunteers in this continuum of service not only builds volunteer capacity, but also provides volunteers with opportunities to grow, learn, and have experiences that may be useful in their professional and personal lives. Most importantly, empowering volunteers to lead their peers will help us realize our mission – mobilizing a community of volunteers who inspire all public school students to achieve their full potential.

*As a current volunteer, if this idea of enhancing your role is of interest to you, please let your School Relations Coordinator or Dawna Wolfson, Volunteer Development Manager, know right away. We are eager to have you join us!*

## SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS LAUNCHES NEW VOLUNTEER INTERPRETATION PROGRAM

***Are you bilingual in Spanish or Cantonese? Would you like to put your linguistic talents to work?*** This spring, School Volunteers launches a first-of-its-kind volunteer interpretation program to assist students, families and school staff to communicate together more easily.

Volunteers will receive formal interpretation training to prepare them for their assignments, which could include interpreting during parent-teacher conferences, in the school's front office, or serving as part of the school's "hospitality" at family night events such as Back to School Night.

More than 16,000 students in San Francisco's public schools come from homes that speak a language other than English, and school surveys assert that interpretation service is one of the greatest needs in our schools.

*If you would like to be a part of this important and innovative program, please email [volunteer@sfsv.org](mailto:volunteer@sfsv.org) or contact Jessica Pullano at (415) 749-3700 x3034.*

This month  
20 more volunteers  
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needs of our schools.  
Recruit a friend.



## BUSINESSES INVEST IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

Local businesses of all kinds are joining School Volunteers to invest their resources in our public schools through the Allies for Education program. Begun in 1981, the Allies program was retooled over the past year to better support School Volunteers' strategy to focus services on those schools most in need and able to benefit.

Allies for Education partners a business or organization with a public school. The business partner provides the school with volunteers as well as specific expertise, additional resources, and exposure to a broader network of potential support.

Allies partnerships take many shapes and forms. Some business partners have worked with the same school 18 years or more. For these groups, like **Morrison & Foerster LLP**, volunteering in schools has become a valued aspect of their employee culture. On a rotating schedule, Morrison & Foerster volunteers visit **Bessie Carmichael Elementary School** every week to assist in K-6 classrooms.

**CNET Networks** brings **Horace Mann Middle School** students to their offices for a 15-session mentoring program that is conducted twice each school year. Designed at the request of the school principal, the program has a dual benefit for students: a positive mentoring relationship with a CNET employee, and exposure to a professional workplace with a variety of career options. Likewise, CNET employees get compound benefits as the program maximizes the impact of their volunteer efforts and minimizes the time spent away from their daily tasks.

School Volunteers' new strategy offers businesses and schools a menu of options for involvement, ensuring that all Allies partnerships:

- focus on real school needs where volunteers make a demonstrable difference, with an emphasis on literacy, math and science, physical activity, and workforce development
- optimize the time invested by the business/organization and the school.

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**Organizations currently active in the Allies for Education program include:**

4D Traffic	Holland & Knight LLP
AAA of Northern California	IBM
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Advent Software	Levi Strauss & Co.
Books Inc.	Morgan Stanley
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*For more information about joining Allies for Education or other opportunities for your group, contact Eric Torres, (415) 749-3700 ext. 3021, etorres@sfsv.org.*

## BOOKS INC. PARTNERS FOR LITERACY

**Books Inc.** and School Volunteers are sponsoring a series of events to promote youth literacy and help narrow the achievement gap. Having partnered with School Volunteers in the

Allies for Education program for seven years, **Books Inc.** – known for promoting new literature – will showcase

### Peace Poem

Love lives in your heart.  
Peace lives in you too.  
Love not money is the place to start.  
Quiet and Peace are true.  
So peace can be in you.

*by Christian Elmore, second grade*

writing by students from the six schools in which School Volunteers focuses the largest proportion of its resources.

Kicking off the series in September, three student-authors from **John Muir Elementary** shared the podium with award-winning author **Alice Walker**. The students, winners of their classroom writing contest, read their own poems about peace before Walker read from her new children's book, "Why War Is Never a Good Idea," to more than 100 community members in attendance. *(See student poem at left)*

Muir Literacy Specialist **Wesley Tang** noted, "The writing activity not only reinforced our students' literacy development, it also provided them a meaningful opportunity to write about something that is so important in their lives. The winning contestants were thrilled to meet Alice Walker, but I think the true winners were all the students who participated in the contest, the rich discussions, and the writing process."

Visit [www.sfsv.org](http://www.sfsv.org) for upcoming events.





# SCHOOL LUNCH CELEBRATION

At School Volunteers' annual Back to School Lunch more than 700 guests filled the grand ballroom at the Fairmont Hotel on October 3, 2007, to celebrate the great work of community volunteers in San Francisco's public schools. Our largest fundraiser of the year, this event raised more than \$625,000 for our programs.

Among those honored were:

- Volunteer of the Year **Judy Grossman**, who in only five years helped **Mission High School** raise its percentage of four-year-college bound graduates from 22% to more than 56% through the ASAP program
- School of the Year **Moscone Elementary** for its exemplary use of volunteers
- Partnership of the Year **salesforce.com** which sponsors the "I'm All Ears" Read-Aloud Program at **Jean Parker Elementary**.

Professor **Maryann Wolfe**, a dyslexia researcher and professor at Tufts University, delivered the keynote address and call to action around the

importance of reading to develop thinking skills. San Francisco Unified School District Superintendent **Carlos Garcia** and Mayor **Gavin Newsom** each spoke about the importance of community engagement in creating strong and equitable schools.

Participation from the public school community – including the **Aptos Elementary School Jazz Band**, **Jefferson Elementary Crossing Guard**, and **Alvarado Second Grade Singers**, along with teachers and staff from many of San Francisco's most challenged and hard-working schools – reinforced the reason for the event: celebrating the community of support that we are building around our schools and the great things that are happening there every day.

Thanks to our community of support for a fantastically successful event!



2007 Back to School Lunch Chairs (l-r) Jim and Debbie Messemer, Ed and Betsy McDermott, and Raj and Soo Venkatesan.



Volunteers from Allies Partner of the Year salesforce.com celebrate with students from Jean Parker ES.



Volunteer of the Year Judy Grossman with one of her Mission HS mentees, Antoinette Osborne, who is now in college.

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# SUPERINTENDENT CARLOS GARCIA

There is almost nothing more critical to the success of our children than the presence of caring adults. I am so grateful to San Francisco School Volunteers and the thousands of volunteers that join us in our school communities to share their talents. Well-trained and supported volunteers can contribute to students' learning and lead to meaningful personal connections, while teaching our children about generosity, caring and community.

I have served as superintendent in three other districts, including one of the largest districts in the country. Regardless of the number of students and the size of the budget, I have experienced that it takes partnerships to create schools that serve every child well. School staff alone cannot teach children all the things that we wish and hope for them to learn. Government resources alone cannot equip schools with what is needed to provide a well-rounded 21<sup>st</sup> century education.



San Francisco Unified School District is the top performing large urban school district in the state, but we have a long way to go. While the District keeps making steady growth in student test scores, many of our Pacific Islander, African American and Latino students are still not proficient in core subject areas. Our technology is sorely outdated. Soaring employee and retiree health care costs along with dwindling student enrollment mean that SFUSD has even less money to address our most important priorities: achievement, access and accountability.

We need to add even more support from the private and public sectors to create schools that reflect this century. In my six months on the job, I have seen that San Francisco School Volunteers is committed to participating in strategic collaboration with the District and getting volunteers and resources to the schools that need them the most. I am excited about where we can go together.

*Make 2008 Great! Volunteer!*

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