

Board Meeting, 4/25/2011

Friends of MVLA – NOVA Workforce

We are proud to honor our Sunnyvale neighbor, NOVA Workforce, and the long partnership we have had with their dedicated and skilled staff in a variety of stellar programs for nearly 30 years. It is easy to give tribute to NOVA since it does so many things consistently well for the north county area. Because NOVA has been named one of the four top performing workforce investment boards in the NATION, it attracts visitors such as presidents, congressmembers, senators and other well known officials who speak highly of NOVA's mission, its commitment to results, and its focus on the needs of the working community. Earlier this year, Governor Jerry Brown awarded NOVA a \$5m grant to provide employment and training services. NOVA was recently featured in the San Jose Mercury News for its extensive job training and support for the unemployed and also for an opinion piece titled: "Workforce Retraining is the Key to Silicon Valley's Competitiveness."

We are especially proud of OUR strong and continuing relationship with NOVA. Since the 80's, NOVA has reached out to our district by providing paid summer internships to our disadvantaged high school students. It has funded the adult school to offer our district students summer ESL and computer classes in order to combine coursework for HS credit with valuable on the job training skills. Last summer NOVA worked hard to place students in paid internships in a down economy. NOVA never gives up. This year, with less funding, it is determined to raise funds through donations and grants to continue this rich tradition for our youth this summer.

NOVA serves many of our local families, including our own district, with free workshops on career transition services and retraining, unemployment resources, career counseling, and free computer software training to those seeking to upgrade their skills. NOVA is passionate about offering an interconnected support system that includes opportunities for networking, current labor market information, and retraining.

Kathy Puryear, coordinator of the NOVA CONNECT! Job Seeker Center has sat on the adult school advisory board for the past four years and was an active participant in their recent WASC accreditation process. Kathy offers valuable suggestions on how the adult school can continue to offer a broad, needs-based job training program with limited resources.

NOVA staff has been instrumental in connecting the adult school to EDD, the (Employment Development Dept.) so unemployed adults can be easily referred to our certificated job training programs. Disabled adults who are eligible for training vouchers are referred as well.

The NOVA Youth Committee focuses on high school students and young adults, 16-24 years of age. Many of these young adults did not complete high school and are unemployed or live with their families who are often low income. Typically they prepare to obtain their GED certificate. NOVA frequently has paid for these tests thus removing a major barrier for the student and his family - \$125 in test fees.

For NOVA there seems to be no end to the brainstorming, creative problem solving and their overall determination to make the community a more fruitful place for its members to learn and work.

But there are also the personal stories: the human face to NOVA that the district is so pleased to partner with and proud to share. A mother of two, pregnant at 14, returns to school, gets her GED, becomes a certified nursing assistant, and then is honored when President Clinton shakes her hand at the NOVA 1993 awards ceremony. Clinton pauses and takes the time to ask her how she managed to get her education while working two jobs with two young children.

Almaz Tseaye came to the U.S. with her middle daughter, Menna, to escape ethnic kidnappings in Ethiopia. Tseaye was granted refugee status and came to the adult school to find help in getting a job. With the help of the adult school career center, she got a job as a home care attendant. Two years later, she brought her other two daughters and eventually, three years ago, her husband. The girls all participated in the NOVA Summer Youth Employment program. Hewit and Menna helped in the adult school front office and Mulu worked in the childcare center. They were excellent workers. Hewit has since graduated from UC Davis and is in her second year of medical school at Stanford. Menna will graduate in June from UC Irvine and will start medical school in a year. Mulu is a junior at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. She is in a special fifth year program and will earn her Masters degree in Business.

We are proud to be partners with NOVA Workforce. From a high school student getting his first, entry level job to a highly skilled professional who unexpectedly must train for a new career – and everyone between- NOVA is a loyal friend and supporter of our youth and their families.

It is with great pride that tonight we honor NOVA Workforce as a Friend of the MVLA Union High School District.

Submitted by Laura Stefanski, 4/18/11