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from the office of Superintendent Robert Collins

Meeting with East County Pastors Addresses Home Schooling, Character Education and Values



GUHSD Trustee Jim Kelly, Santee City Councilman Brian Jones, Superintendent Bob Collins, and Pastor Don Hamer

At a meeting of over 50 East County pastors on Thursday, March 13th, we had the opportunity to outline several efforts of the Grossmont Union High School District (GUHSD) while at the same time listened to concerns of the faith-based community.

Two themes that we have discussed more than once were clear. **The first was character education and teaching young people important, universal values:** respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, caring, citizenship and fairness. Teachers and administrators do this every day as part of being a good educator. We explained how in the coming year we want to make an even greater effort to implement character education both through school-wide programs and "Pursuing Victory with Honor," which addresses the conduct of athletes and students in programs such as band, drill team and cheerleading.

The second topic discussed involved "home schooling." Prior to the recent appellate court ruling, we presented the expansion of our Home Choice program as part of the Grossmont Union High School District's Strategic Plan. The Home Choice program provides those parents who have chosen to home school their children, with the opportunity to take advantage of staff and District resources to assist them in the process.

As we have discussed previously, great schools, school districts and communities are about building partnerships. **The religious communities that make up the East County are an integral part of the life of our community.** We want to ensure that we have strong partnerships with our churches and other religious groups. Strong relationships include regular communications and finding ways in which we can mutually support one another's efforts to enhance the quality of life in East County.

A VISIT TO ST. MADELEINE SOPHIE'S CENTER REMINDS US ALL OF THE IMPORTANCE OF CARING



Roger Roberts, Board President, St. Madeleine Sophie's and Debra Turner-Emerson, Executive Director



Marian Happ, the "Garden Lady" supervises the Center's many garden projects

The question I asked at Viking Center and at our Work Training Center is, "What happens to our students with significant disabilities when it is no longer age-appropriate for them to be in these facilities?" That question was partially answered when we visited St. Madeleine Sophie's Center in El Cajon on Wednesday, April 9. Situated on 5 acres on a hillside, the Center addresses the needs of more than 250 adults with developmental disabilities. The Center employs 90 adults and has over 150 volunteers.

For more than 40 years, St. Madeleine Sophie's Center has provided activities and work-related programs that allow students to learn, grow and maintain relationships with others. The Center is a leader in designing innovative programs to focus on the strengths and weaknesses of students. Most of their programs and services are very creative. For example, the hillside is a unique garden that was built and is maintained by the students. Worm farming is a workplace business with between 75 and 150 orders being filled each week. Also, many local businesses provide ongoing vocational training opportunities for students. Programs at the Center include culinary arts training, music therapy, computer training, art, aquatics and organic gardening.

There is a relationship between St. Madeleine Sophie's Center that is similar to our relationship with community colleges and universities. The students at the Center are our students too. Many originated in Grossmont Union High School District schools or centers. We must address the transition of our students with disabilities with the same passion we have for those going on to a four-year college. The Center also provides a tremendous opportunity for student volunteers and participation in support of their programs.

A special thank you to Board President Roger Roberts, and Executive Director Debra Turner-Emerson. Both are also members of the East County Chamber of Commerce.