

The link between education and business – by Catherine Brewer

FRIDAY, APRIL 13 was not an unlucky day for Leadership Oakland participants; in fact, they were treated to a broad exploration of the impact of higher education on the quality of life in Oakland.

The session, held at Samuel Merritt's Health Education Center, Bechtel Room – generously donated by Samuel Merritt College – was led by Stephanie Bangert, executive director of the Office of the President of Samuel Merritt College, and Thomas Brown, an educational consultant.

Bangert and Brown asked the participants to think about all the qualities desired to build an effective workforce, including intellectual knowledge as well as emotional intelligence, teamwork, critical thinking, and oral and written communication skills. The discussion proved both informative and engaging,

and left the participants pondering how parents, children, educators and businesses can connect more richly.

Following Bangert and Brown's discussion, Safi Jiroh, executive director of the Marcus A. Foster Educational Institute, presented the organization's mission –

“to support a superior public school system in Oakland by galvanizing citizen, business and government action for support of quality public education and providing services that support academic equality and successful outcomes for students.”



Bernard Ashcraft is welcomed by executive director Catherine Brewer.



Leadership Oakland presents Stephanie Bangert and Thomas Brown.

Jiroh challenged the participants of Leadership Oakland to be agents of change in the Oakland Unified School District by supporting Marcus Foster in various ways, one of which is to participate in the nationwide program Principal for a Day.

Jiroh also shared her vision of a working school and discussed the needs of the Oakland schools, including how students and teachers can be supported – from a simple solution of providing paper and writing instruments to a more involved solution of sponsoring a grant.

The final link explored between education and business was through Bernard Ashcraft's RTTC, Regional Technical Training Center. With many challenges from the program's inception to current day struggles of expanding, Ashcraft faces them all with tenacity, resilience, progressive thinking, and commitment – all the characteristics of a leader.

Ashcraft explained his philosophy of strategic planning and how it boils down to good old common sense. It's the drive that's needed to take you from where you are to where you want to be, and for Ashcraft and the participants of RTTC, it's a connection between education and business that is helping to make Oakland a better place to live and work.

In May, Leadership Oakland participants will have a full day dedicated to learning about health and human services.

Leadership Oakland is a program of the Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and co-sponsored by Pacific Gas & Electric Company and Oakland Rotary #3.

Catherine Brewer is the executive director of Leadership Oakland for the Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce.

It's no 'grind' for this coffee shop

IT'S A GRIND Coffee House, a popular spot in downtown Oakland, recently celebrated its second anniversary. Operated by independent franchise owner Mary Forte, the coffee shop provides a cozy atmosphere with a blues and jazz motif.

Located at 555 12th St., It's A Grind serves specialty coffee and espresso-based drinks as well as iced and blended drinks, teas and smoothies. Also offered are a variety of fresh bakery and dessert items. And, it has free wireless Internet access and is open on weekends.

For more information, call (510) 268-9902.



Photo by Jerry Metzger

A partnership to help clean Lake Merritt

AS PART OF a year-long collaboration on projects that benefit the urban community in which they live, the students and families of St. Paul's Episcopal School and the parishioners of St. Paul's Episcopal Church have partnered to clean up Lake Merritt. The project began recently when participants donned gloves and wading boots, gathered nets, and headed across the street to the lake to remove items that pollute Lake Merritt and threaten its wildlife.

“This is an exciting event that connects school families with church families,” says The Rev. Susan Allison-Hatch, associate pastor at St. Paul's Church and School Chaplain. “Although the St. Paul's School is not a program of the church, we continue to develop a relationship and partnership that benefits both groups and the community.”

St. Paul's School kindergartner Charlie Buttrick helps St. Paul's Church Associate Pastor Susan Allison-Hatch clean Lake Merritt.

Already this year, the school and church have partnered in a non-perishable food drive and provided holiday gifts to clients served by Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS), an Alameda County organization that serves homeless and transitioning families and individuals.

Currently, St. Paul's Episcopal School is celebrating 20 years of Service Learning, and has received eight national awards as well as citations from many other organizations and the City of Oakland for this community leadership program.

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