

Los Altos Town Crier

Community news for Los Altos, Los Altos Hills and Mountain View since 1947

October 15, 2014

New CHAC program helps at-risk students stay in school

Town Crier Report

The Mountain View-based Community Health Awareness Council (CHAC) recently launched a new effort to identify students most at risk of dropping out and provide them with services and support to help them stay in school.

The School First program, championed by Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian during the county's budget process earlier this year, targets three local schools with higher-than-average dropout risk factors: Mariano Castro Elementary and Crittenden Middle in Mountain View and Alta Vista High, the continuation school serving the Mountain View Los Altos Union High School District

School First focuses on high-risk students identified based on school days missed and other factors. CHAC then steps in to provide an array of support services tailored to each student's needs: individual and group counseling, teacher training and support, life skills, peer leadership training and, in many cases, family counseling.

"Counseling looks different across the different age groups, but family involvement is important at any age," said CHAC Executive Director Monique Kane. "We want to get these kids back on track, which means reaching out to the families to try and get the whole support system working."

CHAC

Santa Clara County funds School First through the county's mental health budget.

"Without the county's support, this wouldn't have happened," Kane said.

Simitian said the program not only seemed worthy, but also made financial sense.

"CHAC's model leverages county funds through the use of professional interns, so it's cost-effective in the short term," he said. "And over the long term, we know that keeping these kids in school and helping them get to graduation represents a tremendous financial benefit, both to them and to the general public." The county support – \$150,000 per year over the next

two years – enables the program to serve up to 60 students at Castro, 140 at Crittenden and 20 at Alta Vista.

The funding also allows CHAC to work with up to 20 pregnant students at Alta Vista, to help them stay in school and manage the difficult job of being a young parent.



Kane

"We also plan to follow students through the program for several years to monitor their progress and keep them on track," Kane said. "This is a real investment in their future."

Simitian agreed that the bottom line is to keep children in school.

"Every time we lose a kid, we lose a future," he said. "CHAC's work with School First prevents that loss of potential."

For more information, visit chacmv.org.

Los Altos Town Crier

Community news for Los Altos, Los Altos Hills and Mountain View since 1947

September 29, 2021

Can I afford college?

By Thuy Thi Nguyen

“Can I afford college?”

It’s a question that’s front and center on the mind of nearly every high school student. And let’s face it, with rising tuition costs and the ever-growing student debt crisis, it’s a legitimate concern for many young people across the country.

It’s no secret that college affordability remains a leading barrier to college access and success. There’s one segment of our student population that’s at an even greater disadvantage: those who are low-income, BIPOC and whose parents did not complete a four-year college degree. Studies have shown that students from these demographic groups are the least likely to attend or complete college.

Unfortunately, the hardships faced by these students have only been exacerbated by the disproportionate consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Three years ago, Foothill College piloted Early College Promise, an exciting program aimed specifically at helping our underrepresented students. Built

Other Voices

on the national College Promise movement, we offered free enrollment for low-income, minority, first-generation and other underrepresented youth in their final years of high school and waived their course expenses.

I am pleased to say that in the first two years since Early College Promise has been operational, we’ve enrolled more than 2,500 high school students from Los Altos, Alta Vista, Mountain View and Palo Alto highs in the program. That would not have been possible without seed funding from Santa Clara County and the leadership of Supervisor Joe Simitian, who has championed this effort.

With their support, we’ve been able to significantly expand dual enrollment opportunities for high school students in the county to access college-level courses. As a result, enrollment figures and graduation rates remain robust among our underrepresented student community.

Dual enrollment enables students to earn college credit

while they’re still in high school. Most of the courses are transferable to four-year colleges and universities. At Foothill, we are seeing high success rates for our students of color – not to mention decreased college costs.

The marvelous thing about dual enrollment is that it exposes students to the rigors and expectations of college coursework early on. This preview reduces the risk of dropping out because students enter their college career knowing what to expect. And upon entering college, students who were previously dual-enrolled can complete their degrees faster because they have already earned college credits.

Our young people have gotten to benefit from college and have gained the opportunity to broaden their job skills. We look forward to continued support from our county leaders so that we can continue making the American dream real for a segment of our student population that so often gets left behind.

Thuy Thi Nguyen is president of Foothill College in Los Altos Hills.