

## Community Partners Championing Education!

Submitted by Francisco J. Barragan CPA, CIA

Some High Schools in Orange County were recently identified as low-performing, but High School students from throughout Orange County are also benefitting from a long-term collaboration with community partners, with some individual successes. These community partners are brought together by Orange County Youth Motivation Task Force (YMTF).

**YMTF** is a partnership of local companies, successful community leaders, and high schools. The primary goal of YMTF is to **reduce the high school student drop-out rate**. To achieve this goal, YMTF brings local business people and community leaders into the classroom to talk about their jobs, what their companies do, the role education has had in their lives, the challenges they had to overcome to succeed, but most importantly the speakers discuss the cost-of-living and value of education statistics which have been collected by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

With charts and diagrams YMTF volunteer speakers show the students how education can make a difference in their quality of living for the rest of their lives. YMTF was established in 1976 and has made hundreds of high school visitations. For the 2008-2009 School Year, 77 volunteers made 157 classroom visits at 11 schools and YMTF awarded three \$2,000 scholarships to graduating seniors. In the 2009-2010 school year the following High Schools were visited: **Brea Canyon; Century; Cesar Chavez Alternative; Creekside Alternative; Cypress; Katella; Loara; Middle College, Santa Ana; and Segerstrom**; and scholarships will also be provided to a few most improved and outstanding students, with evaluations during March 23-24th.

Current and retired employees of **Boeing, Northrop Grumman, IBM, State Farm** have been heavily represented as well as leaders and members from other not-for-profits organizations such as **UMAVA** (United Mexican-American Veterans Association); **ALPFA** (Association of Latino Professionals in Finance & Accounting), **MANA** (a National Latina Organization); **LULAC**, and **American GI Forum**.

Volunteering is an **extremely gratifying experience** as illustrated by the students' comments. "A few students personally thanked me for taking the time out of my day to speak to them!", stated **Carlos Palomino, former World-Boxing Champ**, actor (30 movies), entrepreneur and US Army Veteran who recently drove close to 100 miles from Valencia, CA to speak to the students. Students' feedback like "Now I really wanna finish high school!", or "I learned from the volunteer speaker that no matter how hard school is, I can make it and go to college!" continues to motivate the volunteer speakers, as well as they champion education with their extensive involvement.

**Aura McClain**, President-YMTF led and facilitated the efforts of the volunteer speakers, and was grateful for Palomino's visit, who is also an Honorary Member of UMAVA, because the volunteer speakers got to meet a World-Boxing Champ as they championed education!

YMTF is always looking for volunteers – please visit: <http://ymtf.org/>  
Or contact [Commander@umava.org](mailto:Commander@umava.org)

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