

Bill Somerville Receives Gerbode Fellowship for 2004

Bill Somerville, PVF President, has been selected to receive a Gerbode Fellowship for 2004. The UC Berkeley, School of Social Welfare operates the Gerbode Professional Development Program with support from the Gerbode Foundation. Each year they select a small group of experienced executives, whose outstanding achievements are highly regarded by their peers, to become fellows in the Gerbode Professional Development Program. As part of the Fellowship, Bill shall receive a grant to be used toward professional development. Bill is honored to receive this award and is very grateful to have been selected as a Gerbode Fellow.

Stanford University Students Grant \$25,000 to Local Community Non-Profits

The Stanford University course, Introduction to Community Service Organizations, Department of Urban Studies, is fertile ground for inspiring youth to work in the non-profit sector. As part of the curriculum created by PVF, the class is given a fund of \$25,000 from which to make grants to charitable projects on the San Francisco Peninsula. This is Bill Somerville's sixth year co-teaching the Stanford course in conjunction with the Haas Center for Public Service.

Bill Somerville leads the students as they assess local non-profit organizations and engage in grant making on the theme of affordable housing. The students conduct research, make site visits, and interview staff. Each student writes up a performance analysis of a non-profit organization and presents a summary of the organization's mission, effectiveness and need

to the class. As a group, the students review each grantee and then decide which organizations will receive grants and how much.

Funding for the Stanford Student Philanthropy Program has been made possible for the last six years by Susan Ford Dorsey, through her donor advised fund at PVF.

Education and Economic Opportunity in East Palo Alto

When asked what is the key to getting out of poverty, Sister Christina Heltsley, Director of the St. Francis Center that feeds, clothes and houses the poor, says "Without a doubt, education." Many of the people that PVF works with agree.

In response, PVF established English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in apartment buildings throughout East Palo Alto, offering adult ESL classes in the daytime and evenings, as well as, child care. The in-residence component and the availability of child care proved critical to success. Attendance was high and constant. Students progressed from basic to advanced English curriculum.

PVF is now in the second phase of the program, creating job opportunities in the East Palo Alto community for ESL graduates. Thus far, five students have been placed in the schools as Parent Involvement Workers (PIWs), through a program initiated by PVF. The PIW serves as the liaison between the classroom teacher and the parents. More than a translator of Spanish/English, a PIW is the bridge between the school and the families. The first PIW, Martha Perez, obtained employment with the Ravenswood School District of East Palo Alto,

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working part-time with third grade teacher, Amy Sumners. Ms. Sumners reports that within the first two weeks of school, Ms. Perez had made home visits to every student's family, making them aware of the school's commitment to their child's success and her role as PIW. As a result, attendance at Parent/Teacher conferences went from 25% to 100%. Ms. Perez was available to answer parents' questions, convey important teacher information to parents regarding a child's progress and/or needs, and create a weekly bilingual newsletter in Spanish/English from the teacher to the parents.

Teachers had been frustrated by their inability to adequately communicate with Spanish speaking families. Not being able to convey students' achievements and areas for improvement was affecting progress. Lack of parental participation was misinterpreted. Once the lines of communication were in place, parental participation was strong. The parents embraced the PIW concept, as it kept them informed of their child's progress and made them feel included in the education process.

As new graduates emerge from the adult ESL classes, PVF assists in finding employment for them as Parent Involvement Workers in the schools. PVF is working to double the number of PIWs in East Palo Alto by year end. This program creates a cycle of support for education and economic opportunity: ESL classes result in qualified candidates for employment as PIWs. In turn, the PIWs work with the schools to enhance the education of Spanish speaking families to ensure that the next generation will be qualified to enter the job market.