

Parent leaders honored

On Feb. 27 in the Community Room at the Napa City-County Library, nine Napa County residents were quietly honored for their commitment to our community as parent leaders. The ceremony and tea, sponsored by ParentsCAN, was small but the commitment these parents have made is great.

Ines DeLuna, Claudia Gallegos, Sheri Green, Keri and Robert Horon, Irais Lopez, Jennifer Siegfried, Catalina Velasquez and Kim Wedlake were nominated by five local agencies as honorees of the 2008 Napa County Parent Leadership Awards. This event marked the third year that National Parent Leadership Month was celebrated locally, which included a Napa County Board of Supervisors' Proclamation presented at the event by Supervisor Chair, Brad Wagenknecht.

National Parent Leadership Month was created by Parents Anonymous to educate the public about this vital, family-strengthening and community-building strategy, to encourage professionals, policy-makers and other community members to create partnerships with parents to address issues affecting children and families. Parent leadership occurs when parents gain the knowledge and skills to function in meaningful leadership roles and represent the "parent voice" at the policy table of programs that impact them. The celebrations held at the local, state and national level highlight the many opportunities available for parents to engage in partnerships with the goal of building and supporting strong, safe families.

Calistoga Family Center, Child Start Inc., Child Abuse Prevention Council/Cope Family Center, ParentsCAN, and St. Helena Family Resource Center each nominated parents who support the work of their agencies. An introduction of the parents preceded a presentation of their awards. Between the nine parents honored, their leadership includes school board president, bicultural and bilingual English/Spanish voices, resource center volunteers and fundraising support, members of policy councils at the local, state and national level, co-founders of support groups, as well as providers of compassion and support to parents one-on-one.

Dr. Barbara Nemko, Superintendent of the Napa County Office of Education, conversed with the attendees regarding what it takes to be leader, encouraging them to imagine change and explaining the steps to make their vision a reality.

The parent leaders honored at the awards ceremony each began in their own homes accomplishing things that may have at first seemed impossible. They used the knowledge they received to reach out a hand to other parents creating a circle of support, which in turn is developing the next parent leaders in Napa County./Register