

Cindy Gompper Graves

From: Alex Ott [aott@marstonandmarston.com]
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To: 'Cindy Gompper Graves'
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AT&T Donates \$19K to Combat Local Student Drop-out Rates

The South County Economic Development Council (SCEDC) received a \$19,000 grant from AT&T to fund an educational directive addressing school drop-out rates in South County. Joining forces with Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD), San Ysidro School District, and key local businesses, SCEDC is developing the UP Link retention project, which addresses schools in South County with the greatest drop-out rates.

"As a long time educator, the issue of school dropout prevention is a real priority for me," said Assemblymember Marty Block. With the support of the business community, the school districts, and their families, it is my sincere hope the students in the project will have the opportunity to focus on staying in school."

UP Link will include a mentor program involving peer tutoring on skills for successful learning. The students of the program will produce a graphic novel to encourage their peers to stay in school. Local business leader visits and location tours will foster student career exploration.

"The business sector and the education segment working together can provide support and motivation for young students who are the future workforce of tomorrow," Norma Hernandez, SCEDC Vice President, Co-Chair of Workforce and Education Committee.

The mentoring program will target students at SUHSD's three high schools with the highest dropout rates. It will be modeled from Hilltop High School's innovative and already successful Connect Crew program, which trains juniors and seniors as mentors to entering freshman. These mentors will serve as role models and motivators to the at-risk freshman, providing peer tutoring and encouraging school success skills.

In conjunction with students from High Tech High Chula Vista (HTHCV), a graphic novel that encourages students to stay in school will also be produced. The comic book will be illustrated, written, and edited by HTHCV students and will be made available online and in limited print for all South County students.

"We're proud to support innovative education programs that can make a huge difference in the lives of young people in our community - especially for those most at-risk," said Christine Moore, AT&T External Affairs. "AT&T salutes SCEDC for its work to bring members of the community together to help address the drop-out crisis here in South County."