

ACTIVE news



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THE ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN TEXAS

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LAREDO BUSINESSPEOPLE SPEAK OUT

Dallas Public Library

At the Advisory Council meeting in Laredo last month, one of the most outstanding aspects of the program was the panel made up of chairs of local advisory committees and local administrators. The topic was "Vocational Programs in the Laredo Area," but the bulk of the input was on the importance of vocational education to the lives of the people in Laredo and the linkages between business and industry and the educational community.

The State Advisory Council feels local advisory committees are one of the most important elements in a successful education system. Council members were impressed and touched by the testimony given by panel members and felt some of the highlights should be shared through this newsletter.

David I. Martinez has been on both sides of the fence -- as a former vocational agriculture teacher and currently as a businessman. "Since I left the teaching profession and moved into the business community, I have found there are a lot of private citizens who would be very active if they were asked to serve on a local advisory committee. I feel this applies not only to Laredo, but to every city in the state."

Mr. Martinez said he was glad to have an opportunity to meet members of the State Advisory Council and note their "enthusiasm," because "sometimes at the local level we feel that possibly our efforts are gone with the wind. We sometimes feel that as individual citizens in the community we're trying to fight this huge monster...that nobody is listening to us."

In discussing the role of the local advisory committee in Laredo, he said he felt they had found the key to the solution in Laredo. "We have tapped centers of influence in the community and these people are actively engaged in making vocational education stronger. We have found one thing... busy people are the ones who get things

done. Don't be afraid to approach busy people. They'll willingly squeeze you in because we're dealing with the youth of our community. As advisory committee members, we work very closely with the vocational administrator to try and develop what we feel is a good curriculum for vocational programs. Using the experience of the advisory committee members to guide the programs, we're going to see some fruitful results."

Mr. Frank Closs of Sears & Roebuck in Laredo has served on advisory councils for nine years and has been chair for the last two. He explained that their advisory committee meets an average of two or three times a year. "In the Spring we talk about the particular employment needs of the students who will be seniors and going into the community and what we as advisory committee members can do to help the instructors and the students seek employment in the community. We help arrange for interviews, line people for the students to see."

He said his company employs 13 students who work an average of 15 to 30 hours per week. "I'm sold on these kids because they do a fantastic job. I personally interview everyone we hire. We have a very low turnover." He said almost all the students they hire remain in Laredo for junior college or four-year degree and work for the company that entire time.

"For example, my credit department is almost totally made up of students who have been through the Vocational Office Education program. Some of them have six years experience now. They are very productive and ambitious, hardworking and dedicated. They also feel an obligation to themselves and to other students."

The Advisory Committee members meet individually with students during a class period each semester. "We talk to them about the vocational programs, free enterprise, and anything that seems to be pertinent -- even current

events. This gives them a better idea of what we as employers might be looking for in their area. It also gives them a chance to know the business people in the community.

"I am sold on young people. I have never had a person from vocational classes fired for any reason. This is one of the reasons I like to interview the students. I tell them that they're laying the groundwork not just for themselves, but for people who are following behind them. And the better track record they set, the easier it's going to be for the next group behind them to find jobs."

Mr. Jesus Garcia, another Laredo businessman, said he had been on advisory committees for about five years and had served as a volunteer on various programs trying to help the poor. "The poor in this community and across the United States are a part of us. We are doing our best, but we are asking you ladies and gentlemen to help us expand vocational training, especially for masons, electricians and carpenters. I have been poor all my life and know what it is like and how important it is to have a skill. So, I say to you from my heart...please help us help the poor people in our community become good citizens. There are so many people in our community on welfare and food stamps. We must teach the young people how to make a living...we must teach them a skill. Businessmen want skilled workers these days, so let's work to get some more money and expand these vocational programs in a way where no businessmen will tell us, 'your people are not skilled.' We must help these people become proud citizens of tomorrow."

Mrs. Ana Maria Lozano explained that she was a simple person...a housewife...who welcomed the opportunity to help the disadvantaged and youth of Laredo by serving on an advisory committee for many years.

She said that the Golden Rule involves human charity and helping the disadvantaged. "I have always tried to get more and more people to participate to help the young to be better human beings -- to learn the basic obligations of our daily lives. That is why the advisory committee is so important. We get people on our advisory committee from as many different resources as possible -- the junior college, business and industry, state and federal agencies, etc."

Mrs. Lozano said she draws from her own

experiences in communicating with other committee members. "We don't have enough preparation academically, but most of all, we need more skills training. We see our people probably paying more for a plumber than for seeing a doctor. We are always in competition with other metropolitan areas, so we must expand our programs and train the youth of Laredo. We must also expand vocational education in the State of Texas and this should start in Junior High."

Domingo Arechiga, president of Laredo Junior College, was called upon to provide a summation of what had been stated by the panel members.

"Perhaps the most significant criticisms leveled against education is the fact that we don't coordinate the different levels of education as much as we should. The elementary people don't get together with the junior highs and the junior high people with the high schools and the high schools with the community colleges and the community colleges with the senior colleges and research institutions. We simply don't have enough cooperation and coordination between these educational entities. That is why I feel your role and function as the State Advisory Council is so important, because you have representatives from all these institutions on your Council.

"Education continues to be the most important force to alleviate the major ills of society...sickness, unemployment, poverty. What we need is the involvement of all aspects of our community -- not only business and industry, but people from the barrios. We need the input. We need to know what the real issues and concerns are. We have a big problem and a big job to do and we need your help.

"Advisory committees need information from every level of activity in a community. The information leads to an understanding or knowledge and this leads to an appreciation of the situation. Appreciation in turn leads to involvement and this leads to commitment and commitment to service and this is what life is all about. We feel good when we render service that's decent and good and makes life better for many different people. And that is what the people on our local advisory committees are doing -- taking time to work to make life better for the people of Laredo, just as you on the State Advisory Council are doing on a statewide basis."

IMAGE CAMPAIGN GIVEN BOOST

Mrs. Diane Sullivan, who is Manager of Business Planning at Rockwell International, Inc., in Richardson, is a BIG backer of vocational education and said so in the April newsletter of the Altrusa Club of Richardson. As president, she said she claimed the privilege of sounding off on a favorite topic...
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION.

"One of the healthiest trends in education is the recognition of vocational training as an equally satisfactory way of preparing a child for a responsible, productive, successful and fulfilling life. The 'college for everyone' syndrome of the late '60s and '70s is being cured by reality. Happiness is not guaranteed with a sheepskin...nor is a job. There are continuing sagas of PhDs settling for mediocre positions unrelated to their education and goals. My guess is the percentage of Masters' degrees among the cocktail waitresses in Austin is higher than for systems analysts at IBM.

"We need to bury our prejudices and our college orientation and help each child find what is best for her or him. For many the answer will be a vocational school or 'shop' course, or distributive education...whatever the term used. Our economy can certainly ab-

sorb more plumbers and auto mechanics than it can history majors. And believe me, Canyon Creek Country Club has members with 'dirty' hands.

"The major problem still faced by Vocational Education is its public image. Voc-ed is typed as being for the C student, the unmotivated scholar, the problem teenager...the loser. WRONG!!! Vocational training is for everyone.

"I've personally endorsed a recommendation that the State Board of Education add 'a marketable skill' as a requirement for high school graduation, in addition to satisfactory academic achievement. I take every opportunity to speak out for first class status for vocational students. I encourage all youngsters who seek advice...and lots that don't...to take a book-keeping or drafting or welding course. Texas has superb postsecondary vocational schools...so many of our youth would find the answers there rather than in academia.

"Will you join me in a campaign to raise the image of Vocational Education...to recognize the equality of the voc-ed student...to promote vocational training as a desirable alternative. Here's an opportunity to be altruistic and selfish at the same time...because we will all benefit."

A SUCCESS STORY EXTRAORDINAIRE

A prominent Dallas businessman called the Council office very excited about the VICA (Vocational Industrial Clubs of America) contests that were held in Ft. Worth recently.

These contests are an excellent example of the support business and industry are giving vocational education. For example, the Texas Association of Home Builders give \$300 scholarships to the top three winners in each category for a total of \$1,800. They also send the first place winners and a sponsor to the national VICA meeting, which will be in Atlanta this year.

This excited businessman is one of the most enthusiastic backers of vocational education in the state -- Jesse Harris of Jesse Harris Construction Company. When speaking of vocational students, he often waxes poetic: "All heroes are not on the football field or basketball court. You can see just as much competitive spirit and pride in these skills contests. These kids are the greatest!"

In speaking of outstanding aspects of the contest, he made special mention of the student who won the cabinet-making contest. When informed that the one stipulation on the \$300 scholarship is that it be used at a Texas school, the top cabinet-maker said he wouldn't be able to accept it -- he had just gotten word that he had been accepted at the Air Force Academy -- which is not in Texas! Well, Mr. Harris quickly assured Ed Jezisek II that they could probably work something out!

Upon hearing this story, the Editor of this newsletter saw an opportunity to combat the stigma that only inferior students and losers go into vocational education.

Ed Jezisek, as it turns out, is a 4.0 student at Lee High School in Midland. It took his vocational administrator, J.P. Burnett, 15 minutes to read through all Ed's honors and accomplishments.

To list just a few: recipient of Harry W. Sears Award for Leadership, American Legion

