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## **COUNTY SUPERVISORS COMMEND EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE**

REDWOOD CITY, Calif., July 7, 2009 - At its regularly scheduled meeting this morning, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors presented commendations in recognition of educational excellence in the county.

Pat Gemma, superintendent of the Sequoia Union High School District, was presented with a commendation for leadership of the District - "one of the bright lights of education in our County," according to Supervisor Rose Jacobs Gibson, who made this morning's presentation.

The Sequoia district is a "comprehensive public high school system that serves the needs of a diverse group of students through innovative programs, state-of-the-art facilities and dedicated teachers and staff," said the supervisor.

"During his tenure as Superintendent, Dr. Gemma has worked to ensure the passage of bonds to enhance the facilities and technology available to students. He has also advanced a comprehensive career-technical education program that supports students as they identify college majors and future careers. Under Dr. Gemma's leadership, students are given the tools they need to excel in a 21st century global society," she said.

After nearly four decades in education and six years at the helm of the Sequoia district, Gemma said he was both honored and humbled to receive the commendation.

"It's especially meaningful to receive this commendation now," Gemma said. "Leaders in public education in the county and the state are facing unprecedented challenges - from the state budget crisis and ailing national economy to unfunded state mandates and limited local control.

"We're going to continue, undaunted, to meet the challenges head-on. We're undeterred because we know that what's at stake - public education - goes to the very heart of our democracy. I am privileged to serve in public education in our great state, and I am honored to receive this commendation from our esteemed county supervisors."

Sequoia district board president Don Gibson was on hand as Gemma received his commendation.

"We're pleased the county supervisors have recognized our superintendent," the board president said after today's presentation. "Dr. Gemma is doing an exemplary job in navigating the District successfully through the current challenging times. He has us headed into what promises to be one of the most exciting eras ever for the Sequoia district."

Also receiving a commendation by the supervisors this morning was Carla Chavez, a graduate last month of Woodside High School.

Chavez is the sole student from her high school to earn an Incentive Awards Program (IAP) award from the University of California, Berkeley. The IAP award provides financial support in scholarship funds over eight semesters as well as support services for students who have

demonstrated leadership potential, high academic achievement and a commitment to serve others.

Cal's IAP initiative reaches out in particular to first-generation college students who have overcome great socioeconomic disadvantage. The IAP program is built on the belief that education is an equalizer and a means to empower dynamic young community leaders.

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