

LOCAL NEWS

pasadenastarnews.com

All hail the mentors

By Robert S. Hong
Staff Writer

Luncheon touts successful Muir program

PASADENA — A youth development group at John Muir High School kicked off its first ever fundraiser luncheon Saturday, showcasing the changes it has made in students' lives and its importance to the school community.

For the past five years, Muir's Mentoring and Partnership for Youth Development organization — MPYD — has connected successful community members to serve as mentors for a group of young men at the school, guiding them into adulthood as well as encouraging them to be successful after graduation.

"The program helps keep their

grades up and helps make them better men," said program co-founder Tecumseh Shackelford.

Students in the program are paired up with mentors who help them with their individual challenges and teach them respect for the community.

"We're here for them 24/7, that's our core mission," said MPYD Board Member Ramon Miramontes. "We anticipate they will graduate and move on to be successful."

Both program members and mentors joined dozens of supporters at the luncheon at Brookside

Golf Course to celebrate their efforts and look to the future.

Students in the MPYD meet every school day at lunch to discuss issues and work with their mentors. They also often have a guest speaker that addresses them.

"We try to expose them to different types of people, like successful businessmen and women or city members," said Program Director Harlan Redmond.

One of those speakers was Assemblyman Anthony Portantino, who was present at the luncheon.

"This program is about the kids," Portantino told the crowd gathered at the luncheon. "I thank you for doing it and I'm proud to be a part of it."

As guests entered the luncheon, young men in the program escorted them to their tables. The students said being in the program has helped them mature as individuals.

"MPYD has helped me become a real man," said senior Oscar Ramirez, 17. "My mentor helped me out a lot, if not for him I wouldn't be going to Cal Poly Pomona."

The program has been success-

ful over the past years, largely through the efforts of volunteers, and the luncheon was a way to raise money to keep the program going strong and possibly hire staff, Shackelford said.

During the luncheon, those involved with the MPYD and program graduates spoke on the influence it can have in the lives of the youth.

And those currently in the program say they are definitely seeing the results.

"The mentors teach us about different jobs and opportunities," said senior Darrel Hannah. "It has taught me how to be a better man and help out other people."

robert.hong@sgvn.com
(626) 578-6300, Ext. 4586