

Pendergast Elementary School District Foundation

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Be the Future

People often ask me why I choose to volunteer and donate a considerable amount of time to the Pendergast Education Foundation when I am quite busy and involved in my practice as an Adjunct Clinical Professor and practicing optometrist of The Vision Center of West Phoenix. For me, the answer is simple. The Foundation is important to me for three reasons:

- 1) It helps in the development of educators. Teachers are essential to ensure success in our modern day society where we serve diverse humanity that strives for equality, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
- 2) It helps to bridge our communities through events that promote the inclusion of teachers, parents, and students intended to develop friendships, cooperation, and celebrate our diversity.
- 3) It gives back to those families and students most in need because in those hearts and minds they might be the next Galileo, Dali, Botero, Curie or Jobs.

I am honored to serve as the Pendergast Foundation President, and along with the rest of the Foundation Board, we will continue many traditions set forth by previous boards and inject new ideas. Our goals are to help others learn about the rich history of the district as well as the Foundation's need and value in our community.

The Pendergast Elementary School District is located in the West Valley and serves the families in the communities of Phoenix, Glendale, and Avondale. The District has grown rapidly in the past fifteen years, increasing from 6,000 students to approximately 10,000 students in the 2015-2016 school year. The District has twelve elementary schools and many award-winning programs to meet various student needs. Additionally, an increasing number of families in the District have income at or below the poverty level, with more than 74 percent qualifying free or reduced cost lunch programs. Seven schools qualify as Title I schools receiving additional math and reading assistance according to federal guidelines. Overall income, both household and per capita in the Pendergast Elementary School District is lower than the Phoenix Metro Area.

The reason an education foundation is needed is because the school district has limited resources and each is carefully earmarked based on specific guidelines from the state and federal government. You have probably read that since 2008, school districts in Arizona and across the

nation have suffered severe budget cuts due to the declining economy. For the Pendergast District, this loss of funds has translated into approximately \$17 million in reductions.

To this end, The Pendergast Education Foundation was created to establish a scholarship program that invests in the Pendergast community, inspires future teachers, and contributes to the growth and opportunities for Pendergast District graduates. Scholarships are awarded to students participating in the iTeach Pendergast, a partnership of Arizona State University. With teacher shortages in Arizona and nationwide, the Pendergast Elementary School District strives to ensure a highly qualified teacher serves in every classroom. While the District currently has more than 600 certified teachers, cultivating highly qualified teachers from within our own district is an investment back to the community. The program is an accelerated, 18-month degree path that provides intensive student teaching and classroom experiences. With the extensive time commitment, most students are unable to work during their classes and need financial assistance.

Since its inception, the Foundation has invested nearly \$150,000 in scholarships for students in iTeachAZ Pendergast thanks to generous donations. In addition, the investment has been reaping huge dividends. Graduates of the program have become extremely skilled, highly effective teachers in Pendergast and other West Valley school districts, and remain committed to the profession and the West Valley community.

Financial contributions are needed to fund the endowment and support this vital program. Donations of any size are welcome and are fully tax deductible through IRS 501 (c)(3). Money collected will be used to fund college scholarships and give back to the community. Your donation is an investment in the future of educational success for countless students to enable them to believe in their dreams.

To donate or to find out more about the Pendergast Education Foundation contact Vispi Karanjia, PESD Foundation Board member and Managing Partner Orcutt|Winslow Architecture Planning and Interior Design, 3003 N. Central Ave. 16th Floor, Phoenix, AZ 85012. Phone number is: (602) 2571764 x4793 and the website is www.owp.com.