



SANTA BARBARA  
EDUCATION  
FOUNDATION

# Education Matters

SUMMER 2022

# BRINGING **HOPE** **BACK** TO STUDENTS!



Brett Larsen leads the Santa Barbara Junior High School Jazz Band at the HOPE Awards.

HOPE AWARDS  
STATE OF OUR SCHOOLS  
GATES SCHOLAR

# **SBEF BRINGS HOPE BACK TO STUDENTS BY RAISING \$150,000**

On Thursday, April 28, the Santa Barbara Education Foundation hosted the Hope Awards to celebrate individuals and programs supporting students in the Santa Barbara Unified School District.



**Student emcees Devin Ross and Isabella Valentine**

The first in-person Hope Awards in three years raised a record of over \$150,000 in funding. Over \$65,000 of the raised funds will go towards We Care, a partnership between the Santa Barbara Education Foundation and the Santa Barbara Unified School District that supports students, families, and staff as they face ongoing and unexpected challenges brought to light by the pandemic. The program ensures that students of families who are struggling have the tools they need to attain successful academic outcomes.

Although the purpose of the event was to celebrate the work of Sara Miller McCune and Frank Stevens for their long-time support of public education, it also highlighted

students throughout the evening. Dos Pueblos High School students Devin Ross and Isabella Valentine served as emcees. A performance by the Santa Barbara Junior High School Jazz Band kicked off the festivities, and culinary arts students from Santa Barbara, San Marcos, and Dos Pueblos high schools served a variety of salads, savory treats, and desserts.

Honoree Frank Stevens has been an educator and advocate for public education since 1960, when he started as a student teacher and soon transitioned to counseling at the then newly opened San Marcos High School. He first became involved with SBEF when he received a grant from the organization. Frank then volunteered to help where needed most, until he became a board member and eventually president. Since his retirement in 1995, he has been volunteering even more of his time by serving on boards and holding leadership positions for various organizations supporting public education.

When accepting the award, he made it very clear that despite his career and involvement in a lengthy



Culinary students from all three high schools served guests at tasting stations.



list of education advocacy organizations, his family was his job, and education has always been his hobby.

Honoree Sara Miller McCune's philanthropic support of our community is well-documented. A life-long entrepreneur and philanthropist, she has consistently advocated for access to quality education, literacy, and the arts.

In her acceptance speech, McCune was grateful for the award but acknowledged that there is still much work. "I want to encourage you to continue working for and keeping in your heart this school district."

She then acknowledged that just over half of Santa Barbara Unified students are living below the poverty line. "Let's not forget that! It shouldn't be this way, and we need to help turn it around."



(Left) Honoree Frank Stevens (Right) Honoree Sara Miller McCune

# STUDENTS TAKE THE LEAD AT STATE OF OUR SCHOOLS

Speaking to community members at Elings Park, Santa Barbara Unified School District Superintendent Dr. Hilda Maldonado and students addressed the community during the State of Our Schools presentation. This year, Dr. Maldonado invited student leaders to share the stage to report their perspectives on Santa Barbara Unified schools to the community.

In introducing the student panel, Maldonado explained, “I would be remiss if I didn’t do this in collaboration with who I work for. And that is why I have students with me today.” She then quipped, “I have all these bosses. I have 13,000, today, I only brought five!”



Dawson Kelly (San Marcos High School), Kavya Suresh (San Marcos High School), Emily Pineda (Santa Barbara High School), Isabella Mireles (Dos Pueblos High School), and Finnegan Wright (Dos Pueblos High School).

But aside from the joking, Maldonado started by looking at the Santa Barbara Unified's mission "to prepare students for a world that has yet to be created," and asked what is the best way to prepare students to take on tomorrow's challenges.

The superintendent admitted that there was still much work to do to get the District to where it needs to be. She then highlighted the progress made with a lengthy list of some of the recent improvements to classrooms, facilities, and resources for teachers. She emphasized the District's investment in increasing the staff-to-student ratio with the addition of counselors, tutoring services, and family engagement liaisons at every school site.

Dr. Maldonado then passed the microphone to students so that attendees could hear directly how District policies and efforts are affecting them and their peers. The student panelists included Dawson Kelly, Kavya Suresh, Emily Pineda, Isabella Mireles, and Finnegan Wright. The students spoke on mental health, campus safety, inclusivity, diversity, and student advocacy.

Many of the students highlighted what was working in terms of services for students and used examples from their own experiences. But students didn't just celebrate what was working well. They also spoke about where they thought the District had room for improvement and made calls to action.

**To watch the State of Our Schools presentation, visit [sbefoundation.org/state-of-our-schools-tickets](https://sbefoundation.org/state-of-our-schools-tickets).**



# MISSION SCHOLARS NABS ITS SECOND GATES SCHOLAR

Last month, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation selected Santa Barbara High School senior Larry Bermudez as a recipient of its prestigious Gates Scholarship. Bermudez, who plans to study mechanical engineering at UC Berkeley, is



Gates Scholarship recipient Larry Bermudez

a member of Mission Scholars, a selective program dedicated to helping high-achieving, low-income students maximize their college admissions, scholarship, and college success potential

“Fewer than 1% of applicants are awarded the Gates Scholarship, which gives it a lower acceptance rate than an Ivy League university,” said Mission Scholars’ Executive Director Cassie Lancaster. “It’s one of the most prestigious awards a college applicant can receive, and, just as importantly, it provides a full-ride scholarship to the college of their choice.”

Bermudez, a top student at Santa Barbara High School, said that the Gates Scholarship was the culmination of years of sacrifice and hard work. “It means so much for me and my

family,” he said. “Not needing to worry about any financial issues relieves a lot of stress.”

The application process, with multiple essays and a personal interview, is notoriously rigorous and time-consuming. That’s where Mission Scholars comes in, according to Lancaster. The organization draws on the wide-ranging expertise of an ever-expanding team of staff and local volunteers to give their Scholars the same level of resources available to their more affluent peers. From standardized test prep to college admissions guidance to mock interviews to academic coaching, each Scholar is given the tools they need to succeed in college and beyond. This necessarily includes securing financial aid through organizations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

“Mission Scholars was a huge help,” Bermudez said, “They provided support through every step of the eight-month-long process. Without that, I do not think I would have made it this far.”

Bermudez is not the first Mission Scholars student to receive this honor.

“We had our first Gates Scholar two years ago, in our very first cohort,” Lancaster said. “Her name is Kathy Ramirez-Gijon, and she is now attending USC’s Viterbi School of Engineering completely free of charge. Having a second Gates Scholar so soon showcases both the effectiveness of our program and the outstanding quality of the students we select. These are young people who will make our community—and the world—a better place.”



# ADAM'S ANGELS JOINS WE CARE TO GIVE STUDENTS ESSENTIALS

The We Care campaign ensures that students of families who are struggling have what they need to attain a quality education and successful academic outcomes. It gives under-resourced kids the opportunity to focus on what's most important — their learning.



Adam's Angels volunteers collect hygiene kits to distribute to schools.

The most recent development in the campaign is SBEF's partnership with Adam's Angels, a local volunteer non-profit group that gathers donations from neighbors and distributes food, clothing, and toiletries to those experiencing hardship.

Adam's Angels have joined the effort by creating 200 hundred hygiene kits for students in the District. The kits will be added to We Care closets at each school site which contain items students may need, such as clothing, bus passes, grocery gift cards, and other essential items. We Care closets will be replenished as supplies run low by both SBEF and Adam's Angels.

**To learn more about We Care,  
visit [sbefoundation.org/we-care](https://sbefoundation.org/we-care).**

# ON BOARD WITH SBEF

Get to know the newest member of SBEF's Board of Directors.

## BETH ROGERS



Rogers is the 4th generation of her farming and ranching family to live on California's Central Coast. She holds a Ph.D. in Political Anthropology from UCLA and an MBA from the UCLA Anderson School of Management.

Beth did fieldwork in anthropology in several regions in Mexico while attending the National School of Anthropology in Mexico City.

Previously, she served on boards for the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Central Coast Political Action Fund for Planned Parenthood, California State Chamber of Commerce, and the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS).

She and her husband have five children and eight grandchildren.

Welcome to the team, Beth!

# SAVE THE DATE!



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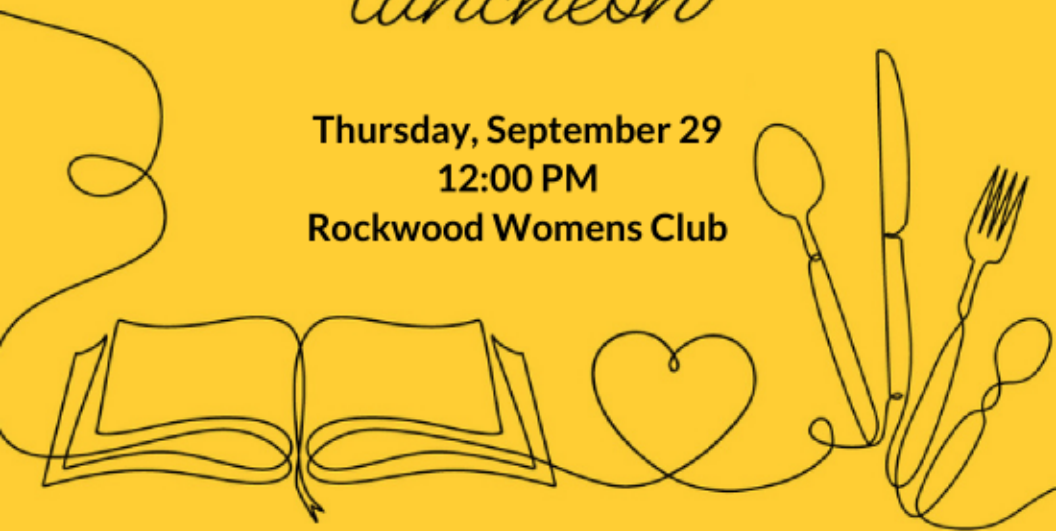
## LOVE OF LITERACY

*Luncheon*

Thursday, September 29

12:00 PM

Rockwood Womens Club



The Love of Literacy Luncheon will feature a keynote speaker (TBA) addressing how literacy is essential to positive academic outcomes and later life success. This inspirational event raises critical funds supporting SB Unified staff development in interventions that increase literacy rates for SB Unified students.



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**SAVE THE DATE!  
JOIN US ON  
SEPTEMBER 29  
FOR THE LOVE OF  
LITERACY  
LUNCHEON!**