

Outlook

A tri-annual publication of the Diablo Managers Association. DMA is a charter of ACSA.

DMA members find challenges and rewards in their work

As part of a continuing series, Outlook is profiling Mt. Diablo Unified administrators and classified personnel who are members of DMA. This issue features discussions with Robert Humphrey, Christine Huajardo, Gary Swanson and Colleen Dowd. The questions we asked were: What is your primary job responsibility? What is your biggest challenge? And what is something people might not guess is true about you?

Robert Humphrey, Principal, El Monte Elementary

Robert joined Mt. Diablo in 1995 as a student teacher at Glenbrook Middle School, followed by a second semester at Ygnacio Valley High. He began his teaching career at Glenbrook, where he taught English/language arts and history for seven years at sixth through eighth grade levels; he served as Glenbrook's Leadership teacher for five of those years. Robert has also been a Summer School teacher and administrator and was vice principal at Mt. Diablo High School for two years. He is now in his second year as principal at El Monte.

At El Monte, there is only one administrator—that would be me. I am responsible for every aspect of the school. As challenging as that may sound, I really enjoy it. I have learned so much. So I don't really have a "primary responsibility"; I have all responsibility.

My biggest challenge is time management, a challenge for most administrators, which includes prioritizing. Every day, every hour, every minute presents a new challenge and a new situation that needs our immediate attention. Those situations come in many forms: student issues, parent concerns or requests, teacher concerns or requests, and then, of course, those wonderful last-minute e-mails. Those are the messages that say, "And we need this by tomorrow. Thanks!" You have to constantly prioritize—this needs my immediate attention, this can wait until tomorrow, this can wait until next week, and then, of course, that just ain't gonna happen!

People who know me know that I am a pretty open individual, so there's not much people don't know about me. One thing that people may not know is that in my free time—wait, did I just say free time? Yes, I'm laughing with you!—I tutor a fourth grade student and an eighth grade student twice a week. It is incredibly rewarding!



Robert Humphrey

Christine Huajardo, Student Services Coordinator, Valley View Middle School

Christine taught fifth grade at Orinda Union School District for five years before coming to Mt. Diablo. This is her fourth year as SSC at Valley View.

My primary responsibilities include many roles. I serve as eighth grade advisor; I oversee IEPs and am our school's



Christine Huajardo

504 coordinator. I also coordinate the GATE and ELL programs and do the school's master schedule. In addition, I serve on the gang intervention panel and work with primarily seventh and eighth graders on discipline issues, social problems and the hardships that come with those ages.

I think I have good rapport with families and with stu-

dents, and I understand where these kids are coming from. I try to help them develop appropriate responses and to work through their challenges—through anger management and strength-based and project-based learning. Our overall goal is to drastically lower suspension rates through mediation and conflict management.

I feel you gain students' respect when they know you care; they will begin to listen to you. One of my goals this year has been to know every student by face and by name, and to get to know each of them. So when they're in my office, I already know something about them and can make that connection. Some of them have said to me, "... I can't believe you always know my name; you know who I am." It's a lot of work, but it provides a foundation for where I go with families and students, and it helps when I'm working on tough situations.

I like to think I go above and beyond to get to know a student's whole situation. I have a good support system at Valley View; I have a principal who operates in the same manner, so I'm learning from someone whose style I find very compatible. It's been good for me to be here and to have that leadership.

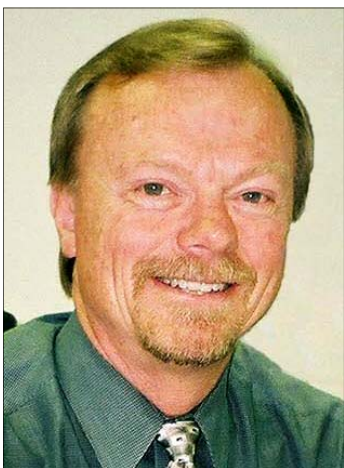
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DMA member profiles: Challenges and rewards *(cont. from page 1)*

One of my goals is that I want go to a baseball game in every ballpark in the country. I grew up in a baseball family and I love baseball! My husband and I made this goal a couple years ago when we were on the East Coast. We traveled down the coast, going to different ballparks. So far, we've been to about 16 parks.

Gary Swanson, Principal, Clayton Valley High School

Gary started out in education as an industrial arts teacher and a swimming and basketball coach in the Maricopa Unified School District near Bakersfield. But when the business world beckoned, he left education for 15 years and went into real estate/property management and later commercial real estate. During a transitional period



Gary Swanson

when he was moving his office, he applied for a substitute teaching position, and was asked to join the faculty of Saugus High School in the William S. Hart Union High School District. Back in the classroom, he taught electronics and video production—and realized what he had been missing. Gary became impassioned about making education more relevant; and got involved in new technology, staff development,

school-to-career and model schools programs. He was the assistant principal at John Burroughs High School in Burbank for three years, half of that time in charge of C&I. Gary was the principal of Fillmore High School at Fillmore Unified (near Los Angeles) before coming to Mt. Diablo. This is his second year at Clayton Valley.

My primary responsibility in this job is—well, it's everything! At Clayton Valley, we try to have one, unified vision and to make sure that everything fits in alignment, rather than having everyone do their own separate thing in isolation. Many times as administrators, we're asked to do things by the "magic wand theory," that is, to fix things that aren't working, and yet we have very limited support. I personally begrudge politicians at the state and federal level who talk about the need to fix education but don't follow through with intelligent action. I agree that there needs to be a huge overhaul of how education functions, but when are we going to get down and just do it?

A lot of my role in this job is public relations. I spend a tremendous amount of time with unhappy parents and unhappy students and staff, and many times they just want to feel like someone is going to listen to them ... That's the hardest part for me, because I believe very strongly about taking action and not just talking about it. Yet sometimes there are a thousand things going on, and trying to follow through can be tough. Sometimes policy gets in the way. Sometimes it's a matter of time or unexpected issues come up. That's

probably the toughest part of the job—to juggle everything and not lose sight of anything in the process.

I think students might be surprised that I'm actually a nice guy! I'm the "mean principal"! When you come from outside, nobody knows you. There can be a lot of hearsay and rumor, which creates a reputation, whether it's earned or not. I'm the mean guy because I'm enforcing the rules. Another misconception is that I'm very formal, yet I think of myself as being quite casual. Maybe it's because I wear a tie every day, but I'll be darned if I'll wear a suit!

Colleen Dowd, Curriculum Specialist, Curriculum & Instruction

Colleen's employment with Mt. Diablo marks a return to the community where she grew up. She began teaching as a grade K–2 teacher in El Nido School District, a community outside of Merced. She moved to the Belmont School District, where she taught special day class and resource for eight years, followed by a stint in administration with the State of Nevada's Department of Education. Colleen has taught family life and psychology classes at Diablo Valley College and education/special education classes in credential programs out of state and at JKF University. She was an administrator at New Horizons, a K–12 school in Las Vegas, for seven years, and principal at an Aspire Public School in Modesto for three years. She assumed her job with Mt. Diablo in February.

District site administration is new for me and the learning curve is high. The most challenging component of my position is to understand and follow through on the responsibilities of the job, while simultaneously learning the culture and the procedures of the district. I am grateful to colleagues in the C&I office for their patience and teaching skills!



Colleen Dowd

In my current role, I coordinate SB472 training for teachers and AB430 training for principals, as well as the GATE program, and the administration of Edusoft, a technology-based student assessment platform that helps teachers and administrators make decisions about student instruction based on real performance data. I also act as district liaison to

teachers in our district earning their National Board Certification. I am currently writing a plan for state GATE grant funds, and I am creating a task force to review GATE procedures.

People may be surprised to learn that my first school was Strandwood Elementary. I still remember my kindergarten teacher, Miss Houseby. This community is home for me, and I am happy to be back. I intend to make a home for my daughter and myself here and reflect on the reality that you can go home again! ■

A message from DMA President Bob Dodson

Moving our association forward on many levels

It has been a pleasure serving you as DMA president this school year. Our association has sponsored and supported a variety of social and team building activities, including the Fall Social and Winter Celebration, the upcoming End-of-the-Year Awards Luncheon and bocce ball outings. In addition, we have promoted professional development opportunities, which included professional book club discussions, reimbursement for professional development, peer mentoring and ACSA conferences.



This year we moved our association forward by promoting our involvement with ACSA; securing medical benefits for dependants of MDUSD managers to the age of 62; and doubling the amount of money, from \$2,400 to \$4,800, that is allocated to elementary schools without vice principals. We continue to have honest and direct conversations with the Superintendent regarding the importance of maintaining medical benefits and increasing salaries to compete with surrounding districts and to maintain our cost of living.

A major effort this year has been our involvement as an ACSA Charter, with more DMA members becoming ACSA members than ever before. As ACSA members, we now have a \$1,000,000 professional liability insurance policy, compared to \$150,000, previously. And this year, some 50 DMA members attended the ACSA Leadership Summit and Awards Ceremony in April, honoring award recipients **Gary McHenry**, **Rose Lock**, **Melinda Hall** and **Laurie Clark**.

At our End-of-the-Year Awards Luncheon, on Wednesday, June 20, we will introduce the new DMA Board, and we will recognize DMA members' children who will be receiving \$1,000 college scholarships. In addition, we will honor five Mt. Diablo managers receiving awards in the categories of Outstanding Contribution to Education, Have a Heart, Most Involved, Lifetime and Rising Star. Deadline to nominate a deserving colleague is June 1. Submit nominations to **Donna Marshall** at Bel Air Elementary.

The deadline to submit a request for professional development reimbursement has been extended to Friday, June 1. Details and a request form are posted at <http://diablomanagers.org>.

Finally, I wish to thank the dozens of people who volunteered their time to serve on various interview committees throughout the year. I also want to thank the DMA Board, including officers and representatives, who dedicated their time and effort to support DMA activities and events. Others served on a host of committees and helped plan and coordinate numerous programs.

Thank you all very much! ■

Management Recognition Award winners and scholarship winners honored June 20

DMA's annual Awards and Garden Party Luncheon, which will be held on Wednesday, June 20, at 2 p.m., at the Contra Costa County Club in Pleasant Hill, will honor DMA members who have made exceptional contributions to the Mt. Diablo education community, in addition to five student scholarship winners. Please RSVP by June 8 to **Linda Hutcherson** or **Nadine Rosenzweig**.

Management Employee Recognition Awards will be named in five award categories. A letter calling for nominations was sent to members in early May; nominations are due by Friday, June 1. For questions, please contact **Donna Marshall** at ext. 84603.

Congratulations to these deserving scholars, who will receive \$1,000 DMA scholarships: **Justina Montez**, attending San Francisco State University, daughter of **Roberto Toby Montez**, Meadow Homes Elementary; **Nicole Passeggi**, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, daughter of **Susie Passeggi**, Loma Vista Adult Center; **Kyle Fox**, University of the Pacific, son of **Michael Fox**, Maintenance; **Nann Rigoli**, Diablo Valley College, daughter of **Diana DeMott**, Mt. View Elementary; and **Shelly Russon**, Brigham Young University, Utah, under the guardianship of **Marion and Sharon Russon** (retired).

Scholarship Committee members are **Hellena Postrk**, **Karen Sakata**, **Donna Marshall**, **Patt Hoellwarth**, **Linda Schuler** and **Linda Hutcherson**. ■

Your 2007-2008 DMA Board named

Newly elected DMA Executive Board members who will lead the organization in the coming year are: President—**Karen Sakata**; President-Elect—**Katie Gaines**; Past President—**Bob Dodson**; Vice Presidents—**Linda Hutcherson** and **Denise Larkins**; Secretary—**Liz Kim** and Treasurer—**Joe Marsich**.

DMA representatives next year will include: Adult Ed—**Margaret Scott**; Alternative Ed—**Pam Neudecker** and **Bernie Yeghoian**; Central Services—**Jeanne Rau**; Confidentials—**Vonda Boucher**; Dent Center—**TBD**; Special Education—**Melinda Hall**; Elementary Principals—**Cindy Matteoni**; Elementary VPs—**Donna Marshall**; Middle School—**Coleen Martin** and **Andrea Uhle**; High School—**Martha Riley**; and Retirees—**Sandy Brickell** and **Evie Groch**. ■

Play a role in DMA's Mentor Project next year!

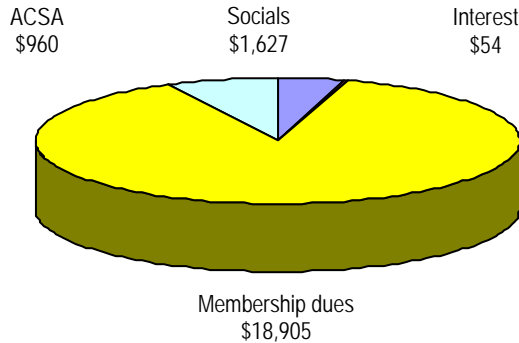
DMA's Mentor Project, which pairs experienced administrators with managers new to their job or to the district, offered support to six mentor-mentee teams this year.

Coordinator **Jeanne Rau** encourages wider participation in the project. "With so many new managers coming on board next year, just a little bit of one person's time and knowledge could mean so much to an administrator just starting in the district or in a new position," she says. Please contact Jeanne at 925-825-7440, ext. 3710, with questions or to volunteer for the Mentor Project. ■

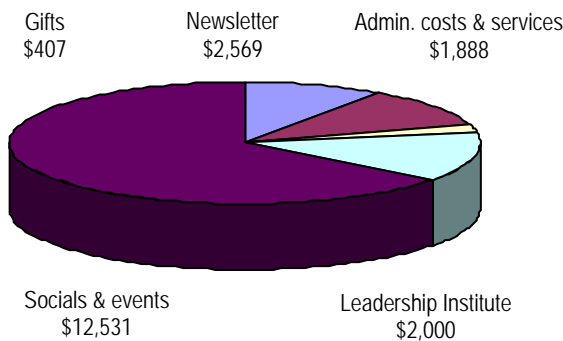
DMA 2006-2007 financial report

Beginning balance (as of July 1, 2006)	\$18,595
Current balance (as of April 30, 2007)	\$18,913

2006-2007 Income \$21,545



2006-2007 Actual Expenditures* \$19,395



Note: Major expenditures, including the student scholarships, End-of-Year Luncheon and Executive Board Dinner, are not incurred until June 2007.

Welcome, new DMA members!

Susan Shih—Student Services Coordinator, District-wide
Richard Jackson—Trades Supervisor, Maintenance
Sue Turney—Database Administrator, Technology and Information Services (TIS)
Harold Waters—Technology Customer Service Supervisor, TIS
Joy Steinecke—Director, Research and Evaluation
Sally Holliday—Coordinator, Classified Training

Congratulations to retiring members!

Sue Agron—Vice Principal, Valley View Middle School
Darlene Biasotti—Administrative Assistant, Risk Management
Phyllis Bloom—Vice Principal, College Park High School
Sue Chambers—Director, Student Services
Evie Groch—Curriculum Specialist, Curriculum & Instruction
Carolyn Murdock—Chief Accountant, Fiscal Services
Don Paulsen—Vice Principal, Concord High School
Jacki Thomsen—Personnel Analyst, Personnel Services

Comments, news & notes ...

California Distinguished School honors ... Congratulations to the principals and co-administrators of the four Mt. Diablo secondary schools that have been named 2007 California Distinguished Schools. Joining this prestigious annual list are *College Park High* (Principal Barbara Oaks; VPs Teresa Hurlbut, Steve Nixon, Phyllis Bloom, Jennifer Bartoli and SSC Nicole Alberti), *Northgate High* (Principal Martha Riley; VPs Jon Penner, Rich Heyer, Eric Kapral and SSC Lynda Hayes), *Diablo View Middle* (Principal Michelle Cooper and VP Patti Bannister) and *Sequoia Middle* (Principal Hellena Postrk, VP Brent Brinkerhoff and SSC David Roe).

DMA Professional Development applications due June 1 ... DMA supports members' professional growth by offering the opportunity to apply for an individual one-time member reimbursement of up to \$500 for participation in professional growth activities. Application forms are posted at <http://diablomanagers.org/pgm-professional.html>. Please contact Linda Hutcherson at ext. 4320 or Donna Marshall at ext. 84603 for details. ■

DMA Executive Board and Representatives

President Bob Dodson, Pleasant Hill Elementary, 4328
President-Elect Karen Sakata, Ayers Elementary, 4300
Past President Rose Lock, Walnut Acres Elementary, 4346
Vice Presidents Linda Hutcherson, Mt. Diablo Elementary, 4320;
Nadine Rosenzweig, Valley View Middle, 5000
Secretary Denise Larkins, Personnel, 4136
Treasurer Donna Marshall, Bel Air, 84603

REPRESENTATIVES:

Adult Education Susie Passeggi, Loma Vista, 4380 #2742
Alternative Education Bernie Yeghoian, Nueva Vista, 925-689-1487
Central Services Jeanne Rau, Transportation, 3710
Confidentials Vonda Boucher, Elementary Education, 4016

District Office Willow Creek Evie Groch, Curriculum & Instruction, 4035
Elementary Principals Jennifer Sachs, Woodside, 4350; Cindy Matteoni, Sequoia, 4330
Elementary Vice Principals Donna Marshall, Bel Air, 84603
High School Martha Riley, Northgate, 3500
Middle School Hellena Postrk, Sequoia Middle, 5600
Special Education Melinda Hall, 4045
Retirees Meridyth Noble, 510-530-2410; Judy Schoen, 925-935-7255

The role of your DMA representative is to represent you on the DMA Board and to provide feedback to you about Board decisions and issues. If you have questions or feedback to offer, please contact your representative. To comment on items in this newsletter, contact Hellena Postrk at ext. 5600, postrkh@mdusd.k12.ca.us. Please also visit <http://diablomanagers.org>.