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Bill Cirone op ed column

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A strong America starts with great public schools

By Bill Cirone, Santa Barbara County Superintendent of Schools

“Together we make a profound difference for public education” is the theme of this year’s Public Schools Month, celebrated in April and sponsored by the Grand Lodge of the Free and Accepted Masons.

It provides all of us with an opportunity to celebrate our schools. It’s a month for thanking those who make a difference in the all of our classrooms: teachers, parents, educational support personnel, administrators, business partners, and community volunteers.

It’s also a month for spotlighting how important education is to the health and well-being of our children, our economy, and of our nation.

It’s a month for strengthening the connection between public schools and the community they serve, and for renewing partnerships between schools and the public on behalf of students.

This year’s theme is designed to remind people that public schools embody the great American promise of equality of opportunity for all and that they are the cornerstones of a democratic society. As the late Frosty Troy, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist for *The Oklahoma Observer* once said, it is a time to remind policymakers that “American politicians are the only ones on the globe who consider education as an expense rather than an investment.”

Schools do not act in a vacuum. They provide students with both skills and hope for the future. Schools can help students achieve to the best of their potential, but they need the support of parents and community members to help motivate students to take their studies seriously. It is a team effort in every sense of the word.

To make our schools the best they can be requires a commitment from every member of the community, from retired citizens to parents, from business leaders to school board members.

The goal of Public Schools Month since its inception in 1921 has been to increase public understanding and appreciation of the nation's schools, to encourage parents and non-parents to visit schools, and to build civic and community pride and support for public education.

We urge members of the community to take advantage of this opportunity to see local schools in action. Those who haven't stepped into a classroom in many years will no doubt be amazed by the depth and breadth of what is being taught.

It's important to keep in mind that by working together, we can give today's students the tools they need to be whatever they want to be. Today's students are tomorrow's consumers and workforce. We all have a vested interest in their success.

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