

FROM INTERVIEWS TO ADVOCACY

The Education Advocacy Committee has completed exploration of school and community knowledge and opinions about dropout prevention and is now putting its findings into action. League members from the three communities that make up PUSD and those who live in Monrovia are working with their respective school districts and communities in developing programs that reflect the Findings and Recommendations developed from our interviews.

After the Dropout Report was presented at the June League meeting, the PUSD subcommittee met to determine strategy for disseminating the report's findings and ensuring that the entire community is aware of this problem.

We decided to target our advocacy in ever widening circles, starting with the most immediate decision makers, the PUSD Superintendent and Board. We disseminated the report to the Pasadena City Council as well.

One of our committee met with the Altadena Town



*Dr. Mikala Rahn,
president, PublicWorks,
and Executive Director
Learning Works
tutors at-risk students.*

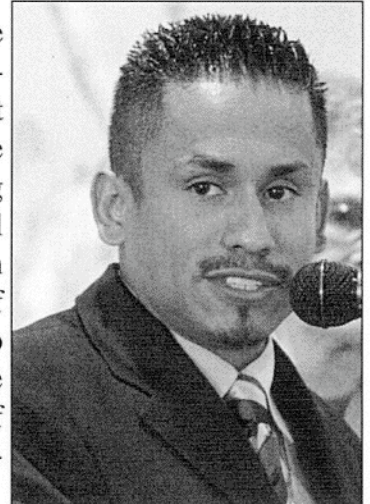
Council, which showed great interest in mounting a coordinated effort. The Sierra Madre City Council has invited us to present our findings at its July 10th meeting. In the fall, we will reach out to the public at large and have already received invitations to speak at several community meetings.

To this point, we have received enthusiastic response. The Superintendent and Board have assured us that dropout prevention will be included in strategic planning for the next year. The Altadena Town

Council has asked us to broker a meeting between it and the PUSD Board.

The MUSD subcommittee found that the interview process itself could be considered advocacy. Many interviewees, especially our community leaders, had not previously thought about dropout prevention and responded that they and their organization should do more. Some of these, including the City Manager, the Executive Director of the Chamber and an Assistant Superintendent of the District attended our League Day.

Since League Day, we have met four times as a committee and have spoken, at their request, to the Monrovia Coordinating Council and the School Board. We met twice with the Superintendent of Schools and held a party to thank our interviewees. We also met with the CEO of the YMCA about coordinating our efforts.



*Ulises Gutierrez,
once a dropout himself, now heads
Monrovia Youth Alliance*

What is happening in Monrovia to further our Findings and Recommendations? The City is offering summer jobs to students and is sending a staffed van into low income neighborhoods to provide books and other services, education for young children and their parents. The Chamber has recruited business leaders to educate middle school children as to academic and personal qualities needed for employment in their firms. The Y is providing personal attention to middle school kids during lunch hour. The District has established an office of Parenting and Volunteerism which, with the Adult school, will be working on parent education.

We have been talking to the Y about a community conference on dropout prevention and the needs of youth. School administrators and leaders have committed themselves to helping us.

Together, the chairs of the PUSD and MUSD subcommittees are reviewing legislative bills related to dropout prevention and are setting up meetings with legislators.

—BETTY SANDFORD and CAROLYN ELLNER