

[From the San Mateo County Times, June 9, 2000]

**BREAKING BARRIERS AND FORGING BONDS**  
(By Laura Linden)

**SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO**—Many teachers upon retirement can look back and know that they had a positive influence on their students. But perhaps few have helped students make such profound life transformations as Rebecca Ryan, founder of the Spruce Literacy Project at Spruce Elementary School.

Through the program, Ryan has taught dozens of immigrant parents, mostly Spanish-speaking mothers, how to speak, read and write English. The idea is the parents will get involved with their kids' educations once the language barrier is knocked down.

But according to several mothers who attended a retirement breakfast for Ryan on Wednesday, her work has radiated outward, affecting every corner of their lives. Ryan, a petite Anglo with energy to burn and a deft command of Spanish, has pumped the women up with praise and encouragement, propelling them into American society with a fearless attitude.

"I'm not afraid of anything now," said 30-year-old Carmen Reyes, whose child attends Spruce Elementary.

Reyes' outlook is a psychological world away from the way she felt when she arrived in this country in 1986 with zero English skills and a lot of fear about a society she didn't understand. "I was scared for everything, everybody," she recalled.

Other mothers echoed this sentiment.

Before taking the literacy class, rites of parenthood like teacher-parent conferences or PTA meetings were unfathomable, they said. The thought of meeting with a teacher, principal or doctor gripped them with fear. They were worried and frustrated when they could not read a letter sent home from school. Often they were too shy, or even ashamed, to try to find out what it was about.

So assured are these women now that when the district threatened to cut the Spruce Literacy Project last year, the mothers vociferously rallied to save it. They are also in the midst of a fund-raising drive to replace Spruce Elementary's dilapidated and unsafe kindergarten playground.

The women still grapple with English, but they've learned that stumbling through the language is the only way to get better.

"I can go to the doctor and to the dentist and the bank. I don't need much help," said 27-year-old Cristina Rodriguez, who immigrated from Mexico when she was 15 but only recently learned to write. Her newfound skills helped her move up from dishwasher to server at Denny's, she said.

Ryan started teaching English-as-a-second-language classes in the South San Francisco Unified District in 1972 and still wears a ring that students gave to her that year. A few of those students were at the breakfast on Wednesday.

"It's so great to see how well they've done," Ryan said. "One woman's son has graduated from Stanford, another one's child became a doctor."

When asked why she is retiring, Ryan just said "it's time." She said she will keep in touch with her former students through sewing and reading groups.

Teaching ESL for 20 years, Ryan saw that parents were avoiding contact with their kids' schools. She decided that the cultural and language barriers hurt the school as much as the families and founded Spruce Literacy Project in 1992 with a grant from

the Peninsula Community Foundation. The program will continue with a new teacher next year, Ryan said.

On the Spruce Elementary campus, the program is a convenience for the mothers who take their children to class and then head to their own class down the hall.

Gladis Pacheco, 39, said two years of the literacy classes helped her land a good job for Catholic Charities in San Francisco. She came to this country from El Salvador 18 years ago and for most of those years she avoided speaking English. "In my country I was a secretary but here I was a maid," she said.

Now she can help her three young children with their homework. Her daughter, Martha, sent a letter to Ryan thanking her for teaching her mom English.

"It was so cute, I didn't even know that she did that," Pacheco said.

Perhaps the best part is knowing the children are proud of you, Rodriguez said. "My daughter was sad before when I couldn't speak English but now she's happy," she said.

Perhaps the best example of Ryan's 28 years in the district is the Flores family.

Alejandro Flores, 20, and Florisela Flores, 23, took ESL classes from Ryan when they were in elementary school. Now students at San Francisco State University, the siblings say they gained a sense of well-being from Ryan that continues to this day.

"I was a silent kid, very lonely. But (Ryan) was so nice to me. I liked computers and she rewarded me with computer time," said Alejandro, who along with his studies runs a Web design company with a friend.

Florisela said she wouldn't be studying three majors with the intention of getting a master's degree in computer science if Ryan hadn't shown her the power of persistence 15 years ago. •

**INTEL CORPORATION'S TEACHER HOUSING FUND**

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, when discussing the profound effect of California's Silicon Valley on our Nation's economy, we too often focus on just the raw numbers: staggering revenues, high profile IPOs and the bottom line.

Today, I want to focus on an outstanding example of good corporate citizenship in Silicon Valley intended to promote home ownership and honor teachers at the same time.

As many of my colleagues know, the Silicon Valley is in the midst of a housing crisis which makes owning a home an impossibility for most teachers. The region's high cost of living makes it extremely difficult to recruit and retain talented teachers.

Today, I am pleased to inform the Senate that Intel Corporation and the Santa Clara Unified School District have joined forces to create an innovative pilot program designed to help public school teachers buy homes in one of the country's most expensive housing markets: the Intel Teacher Housing Fund.

Under this new program, which will be administered by the Santa Clara County Unified School District, Intel will provide the fund with \$1.25 million over the next five years. Eligible teach-

ers will receive \$500 each month from the fund to help with mortgage payments, for up to five years.

I applaud Intel's leadership in forging the much-needed local partnerships that will help lead to solutions to Silicon Valley's affordable housing crunch. It is my hope that other companies will follow Intel's lead, and show the world that America's high-technology firms are the hub and the heart of the 21st century economy. •

**MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT**

A message from the President of the United States was communicated to the Senate by one of his secretaries.

**EXECUTIVE MESSAGE REFERRED**

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate a message from the President of the United States submitting a treaty which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

**REPORT ON THE EXPANDED THREAT REDUCTION INITIATIVE—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT—PM 118**

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

*To the Congress of the United States:*

Enclosed is a report to the Congress on the Expanded Threat Reduction Initiative, as required by section 1309 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000 (Public Law 106-65).

WILLIAM J. CLINTON,  
THE WHITE HOUSE, June 27, 2000.

**REPORT ON THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO IRAN—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT—PM 119**

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

*To the Congress of the United States:*

As required by section 401(c) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1641(c), section 204(c) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), 50 U.S.C. 1703(c), and section 505(c) of the International Security and Development Cooperation Act of 1985, 22 U.S.C. 2349aa-9(c), I transmit herewith a 6-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to Iran that was declared in Executive Order 12957 of March 15, 1995.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON,  
THE WHITE HOUSE, June 27, 2000.