

VALLEY VOICES

Educational excellence: The norm, not the exception

By Joseph W. Brady

Once again University Prep, a Victor Valley Union High School District school, has been awarded a Gold Medal ranking from US News & World Report. Congratulations are in order for Superintendent Ronald Williams, Principal Valerie Hatcher and the staff, parents and students of this grade 7-12 public school of choice.

Of the 2,399 high schools in the state of California, University Prep ranked as the 66th best. I believe this honor, the third straight for the school, is even more important to our High Desert community than most people might realize.

When people look to relocate to a region, the number one item that they consider beyond the cost of housing is the quality of local schools. Quality schools, in my mind, are the foundation of economic prosperity. Excellent educational institutions are the main contributor to the creation of a prosperous economy for everyone.

In his Inland Empire Economic Partnership Annual Forecast in May 2011, Inland Empire renowned economist Dr. John Husing stated that the item of most importance in the effort to turn around the economy of the Inland Empire Economy was education.

The High Desert must have an educated workforce. A more educated workforce supports the local economy by raising the median household income, which in turn leads to new home construction, as well as increased car and retail sales and even more job creation.

The resulting increase in tax revenue helps improve our roads and provides additional money for law enforcement and other municipal services. If we want to be a prosperous region, if we want full employment, if we want to substantially reduce the \$1.2 billion in entitlement funds that High Desert residents now receive on an annual basis, education is key.

The responsibility for education starts at home with the parents in our communities. Being a parent is the toughest job there is, but if we want a prosperous economy, our families, our family units, and the parents within our communities must be the people initially responsible for stressing the importance of education to their youngsters.

Once those young people turn 18, they need to become responsible for continuing their education and we must encourage them to do so. After all, isn't that what every generation wants? A better future for the generation that follows?

As a trustee at Victor Valley Community College since 2011, I understand how important education is. While I believe every student in the High Desert would benefit from attending our great community college, I also hope that every high school student in our region would have ambitions for higher education or for finding a specialty school at which to learn a trade.

We need to challenge our school systems, we need to challenge our educators, but most of all; we need to challenge ourselves. Education is our issue. We cannot pass it off to anyone else.

There are more than 20 high schools in the Victor Valley and Barstow area. We need to find out what University Prep is doing, take that secret and share it with every one of our schools within the High Desert region, starting with the elementary schools, until there is a systematic change to our educational system and the success recognized at University Prep becomes the norm and not the exception. — *Joseph W. Brady, CCIM, SIOR, is president of Joseph W. Brady Inc., The Bradco Companies, Barstow Real Estate Group and Alliance Management Group and a trustee of Victor Valley Community College District.*