

Community Hunger & Nutrition Forum and Get Fit Fresno County Policy Council
Wednesday, Oct. 8, 2008 **Forum: Noon – 1:30 pm**

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(BETWEEN ASHMAN AND DAKOTA- WEST SIDE OF CEDAR)
A Healthy Lunch will be served!

**FOCUS: Vision for Healthy Fresno Schools:
Impact of healthy food and physical activity on learning with the
implementation of the FUSD Wellness Policy**

2008 Candidates for Fresno Unified School

Edie Jessup, Hunger & Nutrition Director, Fresno Metro Ministry: I want to welcome you our 86th Community Hunger and Nutrition Forum. Today we're very privileged to have the 2008 Candidates for Fresno Unified School District School Board.

Introductions Participants at the Forum, and Review of Forum Packet of Information.

Reyna Villalobos, Central Ca. Regional Obesity Prevention Project (CCROPP), Fresno: I would like to introduce the **Photovoice Project** (by local youth assessing their neighborhoods). The Photovoice is a health promotion assessment strategy, which has allowed community people, mostly youth, between the ages of 13 through 17, in six counties here in the Central Valley, to document the strengths and concerns in terms of healthy eating and physical activity. The Posters you see here are being used to make their voice and recommendations known to policy makers through photography. Please take a look at what the youth have said. There are a lot of billboards in our community that depict unhealthy foods. A lot of alcohol and tobacco advertising, especially in low-income communities. So I think it's definitely worth seeing what the *youth* are saying about this. In Southeast Fresno particularly many of youths are engaging in Photovoice, so a lot of these pictures are from Southeast Fresno area. We will be inviting the community at large to listen to the youth in November or early December at an event and see their Photovoice project.

Reyna Villalobos, Moderator for the FUSD Candidates Forum: Each Candidate will do a two-minute introduction/ opening statement. Following this, I will then ask three set questions each candidate has seen prior to the Forum (and in your Packet) focusing on FUSD Wellness Policy issues. Metro staff will collect your questions during the Forum. Please write them on the index cards. We will get to them at the end of the program, and be sure each candidate gets a copy of all questions.

Candidate Self Introductions and Statements of Candidacy

Paul Garcia, FUSD District 2 Candidate: My name is Paul H. Paul Garcia. I'm running for the Fresno Unified School District Board of Trustees, area two. This is my third attempt. Whether people here endorse me or not, it doesn't really matter. Because I think the unions are the ones that are controlling the Board here, and not really the parents, which are the first teachers of our children. I feel that it is important that people think about whom they elect when they go out and vote. I already listed all my experience in the community. And for 20 years, being a volunteer in this district and also interviewing Principals, Assistant Superintendents and being a servant. The Bible says that in order to be a leader, you must be a servant. I think 20 years is long enough. Thank you.

Esmeralda Diaz, FUSD District 2 Candidate: Hello. I am Esmeralda, Dr. Esmeralda Diaz. I have a nine-year old and a two and a half year old girl. This is a sixteen-year commitment with the Fresno Unified School District. I am a former DELA President. This is the District English Learners Advisory

Committee. As President of this committee, one of my goals was to have more participation of the South Asian community. Also I am a graduate of medical school. I did practice medicine for eight years. And I want to let you know that I really believe that the no child left behind-program, it has emphasis more in math and English. And it has affected us, because we don't have any more programs in Fresno Unified. I really believe that the whole body, mind and the spirit need to be functioning at their best. In order to do this, we have to teach living healthy life style. That is one of the problems that I have noticed in Fresno Unified. And I really worry about the communication that we don't have. I barely hear some of the problems. I have to be honest with you. I barely hear about where the grant was for. I just find out that it was for a garden. The way that I have seen it in the schools is they have planted only flowers. That is the way they're using it. We must use the money for the program that it's meant to be used for. And with the participation of the parents, from the first, being the first ones to participate in Fresno Unified. Thank you.

Larry Moore, FUSD District 2 Candidate: First of all, thank you for having us. It's an actual honor to be up here with everyone that's running. My name is Larry Moore. I'm running for the School Board because I want to make a difference in the lives of the children in Fresno Unified. I was born in Madera, California. I went to school, moved to Fresno when I was in the sixth grade. I went to Central High School, Fresno City College. Went into the army. Came out. Went to Fresno State and became a teacher. Some of you may know me in my role as President of the Fresno Teacher's Association for the last number of years. However, I've been a teacher many more years than I was ever involved in the Teachers Association. I taught eight years at Selma High School. I moved to Fresno. I taught from 1984 to 1998 at Computech Middle School in Fresno as a computer teacher. So I had a life before I became a President of the Association. And that life is as an educator. And I believe that it provides me with a unique set of experiences that I can give back to the school district and the community that I so care about. Now I see that I have 30 seconds. I'm right on target here. I hope that I can elaborate what my philosophy is and why I believe I can be a positive contribution as a member of the school Board as we go through these questions and other questions you may have. Thank you.

Manuel Nunez, FUSD District 2 Candidate, Incumbent: Good afternoon. My name is Manuel Nunez. And I have been on the FUSD School Board since 1990. I am a graduate of Fresno State. I graduated sitting alongside my wife, we both graduated together. She was from Hanford. From a farm-worker family. A farm-owner family. And I was from Santa Maria, California where my father was a farm worker for 40 years. And then went into business and successfully raised six children. I came to Fresno State thinking I was going to become a radio announcer. And then I switched my career to history and foreign language. I was going to become a teacher. And then, just as I was about to get interviews for teaching, I was drafted and, then I was un-drafted. I got a deferment because I was going to have a family. And so I got deferred until October, but by that time, jobs were not available. So I didn't go into teaching. But my wife has been a teacher for over 30, was a teacher with Fresno Unified for over 30 years. And I have a child who's been a teacher at, at Balderas for, since 1988. We are a very education-conscious family. All of my children graduated from high school. Two from McLane, two from Roosevelt; and two of them graduated from Stanford, one from UC Medical School in San Diego, and the other one from UCLA Law School. My daughter graduated from Fresno State and has a credential in teaching. My oldest son was probably the brightest, but he also didn't want to continue with college after he got married. So right now he's head of a union, as the Secretary-Treasurer for the Teamsters. I started working with Fresno Unified many years before I became a Board member. I was a recruiter for University of Cal, Fresno State. And I went out and talked to students about going on to college. Help them with preparation. Helped them with their financial aid applications. And I went as far as helping parents do their income tax returns. Anyway, when I was asked to run for the school Board, in 1990, I went ahead and set it up and got elected. Surprisingly, I've been re-elected five times. I've been on longer than I thought I would be. One lady mentioned that she was a great-grandmother. I think I beat her already, because I became a great-grandparent in August. I have five grandchildren. I'm a proud great-grandparent and grandparent and parent.

Natalie Clark, FUSD School Board Candidate, District 5: My name is Natalie Clark. I am a parent of two children. I have a seven-year old, who's in the second grade in Fresno Unified and a four-year old who will be entering, next year. Uh, I am a product of Fresno Unified School District. I grew up at the intersection of Palm and Belmont. Went to John Muir Elementary School, Computech Middle School, and graduated from Edison High School. I went to City College for a couple of years. Transferred to U.C. Santa Cruz, and graduated from there. I came back to Fresno with my husband, we met in high school. We're high school sweethearts. We've been together for 20 years. We started a business. We own Gazebo Gardens and Miller Natalie Clark Nursery and are very committed to our community, the City of Fresno and Fresno Unified. When my daughter started school, I was in school also. I went back and got my Masters in Business Administration from Fresno State and graduated in December of 07. While I was doing that, I also got involved in the PTA and the School Site Council at her elementary school. I really liked being involved in that, and that has led me to be here, as a school Board candidate, and as a professional person. I've worked at PG&E for 12 years. And I realized that there's a benefit in building trusting relationships with open and honest communication. And I will work collaboratively with everyone. The community, the superintendent, the staff, teachers, parents, as a school Board member.

Carol Mills, FUSD School Board Candidate, District 5, Incumbent: Thank you. Good afternoon. I'm Carol Mills. I'm the incumbent in the Area 5 seat, which is also called the Fresno High Seat. I'm in my first term on the school Board. I'm also a parent. I have a child that is now in high school. And I am also employed as an attorney. I'm lead attorney at the Fifth District Court of Appeal. During the past four years I have made it point and a practice to be very engaged in the community. I go out and visit the schools as often and as frequently as possible. Including, I believe paying a visit to at least all of them, at least once. But I've also jumped in and joined some other organizations so that I can get a lot of different perspectives and input from a variety of different viewpoints. I'm currently serving on Chief Jerry Dyer's Advisory Board and I'm also serving on the Fresno West Coalition Community Development Board. Prior to going on the school Board, I was active in district-wide committees. I co-chaired a facility-strategic plan committee and I chaired what was called the extended day, or after-school advisory committee. I'm looking for a second term on the school Board. I think that the district has accomplished a lot in the last four years. I think we are in a much better place than we were four years ago. And that includes academically as well as financially. I think that we have a lot in progress though, and I'd like to be there to see it get finished. Including the facilities projects, continued academic achievement and I certainly want to make sure that we maintain our programs and services over the next few years, because I do expect, what I would call, some very bad budget years from the state. Thank you.

Virginia Hermosillo, FUSD School Board Candidate, District 6: I'm Virginia Hermosillo. I'm a parent with two daughters in Baird, who were at McCardle last year. I have been active in their education since the day they began preschool. I've been active with their friend's education. With the community. I go wherever I'm needed to help out, be it church, be it a neighborhood, the school, wherever. The school they were attending had a garden. They tried to work on some of the garden planting and all. We had vandalism. People climbing over the fence and destroying the strawberries and other areas. We tried to solve that. It's not an easy problem to solve. Especially since the school was gated. But still, they find a way to get in. Baird also has a garden. In fact, their fair is coming up and they're going to be putting their garden goods out for the fair. I think it's a great thing to have that. One thing I did notice was that regarding healthy living, these kids don't all have it. And I do notice that last year when we were at the school (I put in a lot of hours there) that the children couldn't even run straight down the course without huffing and puffing heavily. The teachers try to get ready for the state physical. It wasn't very easy in between all the other education processes that were (inaudible) to them. They had to get the math. They had to get the reading going. So we tried whatever we could to get these kids out. But it's not enough. We need to make sure that every grade level has physical education. Has science to teach about the growing of the plants. To learn how they can grow and how good is it for them to actually grow their own fruits and vegetables. I'm very involved. Very committed. And I want to make sure our community grows in every which way we

can. That includes making sure the kids are doing everything they can. And we're doing it for them. Thank you.

Janet Ryan, FUSD School Board Candidate, District 6, Incumbent: Hello. I'm Janet Ryan. I've been representing the Hoover area for the last four years on the Board. I was a primary teacher back in Chicago many years ago. I've been in Fresno for 30 years. I have six children and grandchildren, who have either graduated from Fresno Unified Schools or are currently attending. I'm a graduate of the University of San Francisco with a degree in Organizational Behavior. While on the school Board, I've earned a Masters and Government Certificate from the California School Board Association. And I spent many, many hours in case study of various districts and Boards across the country. Things that worked well. Things that didn't. So I think that was a very valuable piece of learning for my Board time. I also am the western regional coordinator for an organization called The Concord Coalition. The Concord Coalition was started about 16 years ago by former senators, Paul Saugus and Warren Rudman. It's a bipartisan organization that tries to deal with the federal budget and expecting people to understand what's going on and of course we were warned many years ago of the problems that are occurring today. And it's going to get worse. I'll leave it at that. Fresno Unified certainly still has room for improvement. We have many problems, but compared to what we found four years ago, it's like night and day. We've made enormous strides. And enormous improvements. I'd like to be here for four more years to continue that. I can't get into my part I want to say about the budget in 30 seconds. So I'll hold that for later.

Moderator Reyna Villalobos: Well thank you so much to each one of you for the opening statements. We will rotate the response order for questions. Each will have 1 minute to respond.

Question 1: In 2006, Fresno Unified School District adopted the first comprehensive Wellness Policy in the state, including both food and physical activity. Since that time, there have been few meetings of the required implementation committee. The required reporting to the Board on Wellness Policy implementation has not occurred. Meetings held have never included all stakeholders required by the policy. Meanwhile, stakeholders have visited at least 10 schools recently. A lot of these schools do not know about the Fresno Unified School District Wellness Policy, and continue to be out of compliance with the Policy, both on the Food and the P.E. side. So the question goes, what would you do to see that Fresno Unified School District fully implements its Wellness Policy and on what time line?

Carol Mills, District 6: Thank you. There are a few things I'd like to address in here. It is required that there be a committee, but the committee is advisory as to implementation. The policy does provide that the staff, the superintendent and the staff are implementing and the committee is to help advise in that implementation. The committee meets twice a year. And, yes, not everybody who is on the committee has attended. But we can't require people to attend or force them to attend. We can schedule the meetings and invite them. The reporting will be made to the Board this year, because a report is required every two years, and it first came into effect, the requirement, in 2006. We have done a lot to implement it. The food does comply with the Wellness Policy that FUSD serves. We've also hired a P.E. Coordinator. We've hired eight teachers who are out full-time as, I guess you'd call them coaches, to train staff. Can I finish? To train staff in terms of how to implement the P.E. minutes. And we also have had the P.E. Coordinator meeting in small groups with each of the Principals in the schools to make sure that they are fully aware of what the requirements are for P.E. and that the required postings are made and everything is being complied with. If there are problems, we need to know about them so we can address them.

Virginia Hermosillo District 6: A lot of these issues are new to me. And I want to make sure we comply with everything and I think it's a good idea that, the first thing I would do is put it on my calendar to make sure I do acknowledge it. I have a Yahoo calendar. Everything is on it, so I remind myself and others. I would find out who's on the committees. Talk to them. I would make sure they understand how important it is that we meet together. I would also make sure that everybody who is supposed to do, the P.E. coaches and all, are going to the places. That the teachers are being trained. But I'd also make sure that there is time for it in the schools and in the class rooms. That's what I would do. I would make sure that all the teachers can comply with it. I know with the testing,

the teachers are really pushing to get the math scores up. That is their first priority most of the time from the district. So, I would make sure we do have time and how can we implement it with their curriculum, so it can be done. Thank you.

Janet Ryan, District 6: Well, in addition to what Carol said, and I agree with all of that, the Board also receives a report on P.E. minutes every year. This is required by the state and this comes to the Board in March. So we'll be getting that. And we're to receive a report on the Wellness Policy every two years. So we're not out of compliance. We did not get one last year since it was just implemented in 2006. So we are due for that report before the end of this year. All Principals also received the Food Services Wellness Policy Tool Kit at the beginning of last year. So, in addition to what Carol said, I think we are doing quite a bit to try to implement it. It may not be perfect, but we are moving in the right direction.

Paul Garcia, District 2: Matter of fact the Board is held accountable for the policies that they approve. And that it gets implemented. You hired a superintendent to give you reports on all these policies that they have been brought to them, and I would actually like to see the whole Board work and actually see that those things get taken care of. Every four years, we can be saying the same thing. But I think that it is the Board to be held accountable for these things to be in place. It is our students and it's our children that are supposed to be getting this nutrition. So it starts at the Board. Thank you.

Esmeralda Diaz, District 2: Yes. One minute is not too much time. One of the things that I can tell you, is I really wish that this program was implemented last year. And as a parent and working in the schools, I can tell you that everything that the Board has say, or the administrator has say to us, *it sounds good in the paper. But in reality, it's not happening.* And that is the thing we have to change. We must change. One of the things that we have to do, like I said, is communication. And maybe one of the things that we can do is put those big links, the most important links, to be in the committees that will be parents, teachers, administrators and students. *Always that is the biggest team in order for Fresno Unified to work well.* And at that, we have a lot of things that we can do. We can do posters. Put them in the school. Put them in the class rooms. We can do the telecommunication that we have available for each of the parents. Thank you.

Larry Moore, District 2: Thank you. The issue of health of children is really dear in my heart. And in one minute I was just trying to think how I could sum this up. Fresno Unified, the School Board, I believe, the Fresno Bee and some of the business community are obsessed with test scores. And everything in Fresno Unified's *success of the school is measured by how well you do on test scores. That has unintended negative consequences on our school district. What it means is, things like physical education, health, all get put on the back burner so we can have a program that temporarily, and believe me, it is temporarily, raises test scores.* I'm going to give you just one anecdotal story that demonstrates this. Last year there was a meeting of a high-level administrator with all of the Principals. And the issue of physical education came up, because the law requires 200 minutes per week. I have to stand up to show you. She said well, when the children go to lunch, from the classroom to the lunch, if you have them wave their hands, you can count that as physical education time. That's a true story. And I believe we have to get away from this thing about only measuring schools on one thing, test scores. And get into what's good for children, what's healthy. *I think physical education and health is directly related to student achievement.* And that's what we should be doing in Fresno.

Manuel Nunez, District 2: This has been an issue and concern of mine. I know Joe Herzog was here, and was the one that alerted me about the fact that we were not having, sufficient minutes in the school day for physical education. And I came became very upset about that. *Because I asked for a survey of the schools to see how many minutes they were actually implementing for physical education in our schools. And the report was very, very bad.* So then I asked the superintendent to see if there was some way of making sure that we could implement physical education of a school and what their teacher was having to do, on a minute-by-minute basis, *and there was no allowance for physical education in that schedule.* And so again, I inquired about that. And so there were some changes. *And so I noticed that the other day, there was a memorandum that went out to all the schools that said that physical education was going to be included.* So waving the hands is not PE.

Standing and jumping around at your desk is not PE. There are actually curriculum recommendations to include physical education in the other things that you do, whether it is math or language or whatever. So it can be done. It should be done.

Natalie Clark, District 5: I would love to be on this implementation committee. The Wellness Policy that they developed is a wonderful thing. It all starts with a culture change. *The Fresno Unified School District is going through a culture change. And in order to implement this, the whole community has to go through a culture change.* We're all used to going to fast food for dinner. Sitting in front of the T.V., playing video games. You need to get away from that. I've tried to raise my kids so that they eat healthy. When my daughter was little, her snack in the stroller was steamed vegetables. It wasn't candy. It wasn't, and she to this day does like sugar. She will pass sugar up and eat vegetables. I have a little harder time working with my son, who's a chocolate fiend. But it's that culture change. I get them up in the morning sometimes and we go run down the block so that we get a little bit of exercise. And, and they talk to their friends about it. And they're not afraid to eat vegetables. And exercise. And that's how you have to involve the whole entire community. It can't just be Fresno Unified. And, and that that's the whole idea of a committee. And I would love to be involved in that and help that. Move it along.

Reyna Villalobos: Thank you so much. I will remind all of you that there are cards on each of the tables to write a question for the candidates, please raise your hand if you have a question and we'll make sure that somebody comes by and picks up the question.

Question 2: Obesity rates in Fresno indicate that at least 30 to 40 percent of children are overweight or unfit. Studies show that most students cannot pass the six criteria on the yearly state fitness test. How will you commit to seeing that all Fresno Unified School District Schools are providing Physical Education for all students for their health and academic success?

Paul Garcia, District 2: *First, you need to start with the Board; let them go out there and start exercising.* I think, I'm pretty sure a lot of them do need the exercise. Primarily I think you need to educate the parents. Because the parents are the ones that go out and buy food. You can have nutritious foods on campus, but the thing is, the parents at home end up giving in to their children. And I think that that's very important. Educating the parents. I don't believe in too much committees and all that. Because you know what? Some of that stuff, it could be, they can go ahead and make suggestions and can be sitting there at the table. *I really feel that the parents need to be educated so this way they can support any policy that is going to help their children not to be obese.* Thank you.

Esmeralda Diaz, District 2: Something that we can do, like everybody is saying, and it's probably going to sound that we are repeating. We have to review the programs that there are right now in the Fresno Unified. Like the biggest one that is the, No Child Left Behind. If we modify that program in order for us to put the P.E., physical education, in *everybody knows that if our kids are doing exercise, they're going to come to the class room happier. And they're going to pay more attention.* Because what is happening also is the kids are bored of the class room as well. So if we give them something like this, they're going to be better. They're going to perform better. I think that is a very good opportunity for all of us. And again, communication I think, is one of the keys that we need to work more and try to stop that lack of communication. Thank you.

Larry Moore, District 2: I don't have a magic answer for obesity and other health problems of children. But what I do believe is the *role of the school Board is to set policy and priorities.* If the health of children is a priority and you sent to every school, from the top down, a one size fits all committee, that establishes this is how everybody does it, we know that doesn't work. *What does work is giving the schools autonomy and telling each school, come up with a plan to engage your children and their parents in better health. Every school. It's a process that's important: I believe that we're missing in Fresno. We have this attitude in Fresno that all good ideas start at the top. And they filter down to the bottom. Good ideas start at the school site, which involve the parents and the teachers, and the administrators at that school working together. If we empowered our schools and made it a priority, and said you will develop plans to help increase the health. You will develop activities. And physical education means something. The schools will respond.* Right now, they're responding to one thing:

Test scores. And I know I said that before. But we can change that.

Manuel Nunez, District 2: Well first of all, it's no longer just a requirement of schools to provide the ABCs. We are way past that. *We have a lot of obligations to our children with regards to being able to get them to a level of being able to learn. And health, wellness is another one. We live in an area that is impacted with bad air. And so we have to monitor that for our schools so that we can have flags that tell parents whether it's going to be a low activity day or whether it's a clean air day.* I passed by one of the schools the other day and I didn't see the flags up. So I think that, that has to be a reminder. *Obesity is something that is not hard to identify. And if we can identify with kids that have that problem, we can maybe even get together with the parents and say, look. This is the kind of diet that you, we or a doctor would recommend for your child.* Because that may prevent that child from being alert in school, able to engage in activities, do the physical tests and so forth. And so we would be helping kids, just the same as we would do eye tests to make sure that they are able to see properly; and provide them with eye glasses if needed. The same thing with hearing. *So whatever health problems a child may have, if we can identify them and then get the right help for the parents to be able to help their kids; that's what we want to do.*

Natalie Clark, District 5: Well I think one of things is to *really support the Wellness Policy.* I think it says a lot in that Wellness Policy of what is good for kids. *Partnership with other places, like the City of Fresno, the Park and Recreation Van out to schools.* My kids have been there. They love that thing. They did dance revolution. And, and physical activity doesn't just have to be running around the school. Make it fun. Bring in yoga. Do things that *teach a lot of other things.* Not just how to run. But you can help relax, which will help you in school. Helping support that Wellness Policy I think is one of the key things.

Carol Mills, District 5: Well, I am a member of the Wellness Policy committee. And I think that, plus the fact that the P.E. scores that came in show that we aren't doing what we need to, and the students aren't achieving where they need to in P.E. highlights the fact the Board needed to do something. *And the Board has done something. We hired the P.E. Coordinator. We've hired the eight P.E. specialists to help train our staff in getting these P.E. minutes into the curriculum.* And it's 200 minutes every ten days for K-6. It's 400 minutes for 7 through 12 for the same time period. *That's being done. All of the food that Food Service provides to the schools meets the policy's description.* It is all healthy food. And I think in addition to this, meeting with the principals, it becomes a parent and student education. *We need to help the parents and the students understand that they need to make healthy choices. And that's an education thing for parents and for students. And I think the Board can also set an example.*

Virginia Hermosillo, District 6: One thing I see out there is that a lot of our families are struggling big time. And right now, I know I go to Food Maxx and I buy the apples, grapes, and vegetables. And by the time I get the bread and I get the milk and all the fruits and vegetables we need, and a few pieces of meat, I've already got a hundred-dollar grocery bill for a week. *These parents have six, seven kids sometimes. They're struggling. So they don't always buy all the healthy food. They can't do it and feed everybody. So if we can incorporate the physical education and learning how to take some of the fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods, and do workshops with fun.* It would work with the parents and the kids at the schools, working with the teachers and everybody else. Making it fun. But a way that they can take some of this and make a healthier meal and understand that running around is fun. Playing these games is fun. Instead of sitting down in front of the TV. Or eating the chips in the bag. They need to be taught some of this. *Because it's really tough out there.* And I know that. Living pay check to pay check is really, really tough.

Janet Ryan, District 6: Well the elementary sites do provide the curriculum department with a survey that provides information on how many minutes they do P.E. *So I'm not saying that one hundred percent of them are accurate all the time. I'm sure we know that they're not. But we are attempting to hold their feet to the fire. And hold them accountable.* At the elementary level, we purchased a P.E. curriculum for every site with some block grant funds. As Carol told us, *we have this new P.E. Coordinator that we hired in January of this year.* And that person has met with all of the elementary principals and their assistants. So we are certainly attempting to do our part. *But I agree with the*

others who've said that a lot of this depends on the parents at home. When I was growing up and my kids were growing up, it was just normal to run around outside and play. I didn't even have a car to take my kids to school. So I couldn't do that. We, the parents at home, do have to make some changes and encourage movement.

Question 3: Fresno Unified has been awarded garden grants for all schools for \$2,500 to \$5,000. We understand that there is not School Coordinator for these grants and have concerns that they will not be sustainable, integrated into the curriculum, and have been handled without any support from the District. If outside funding is sought for programs like garden grants, how would you expect the Board and Administration to handle and evaluate substantial funding for healthier students?

Virginia Hermosillo, District 6: Well, one thing is being visible in the schools. Visiting the schools. Checking it out. How can we help? What can we do? That's what I do now. I go to different campuses and I talk to people. *Talk to the parents. Talk to the kids. I think it's a good idea to do it, but I do also know, especially in the elementary level, these teacher's hands are tied most of the time just trying to get the math and the English taught to these kids. And most of the time, it's the math. And there's not a lot of time to do extra work. Now, if we can find a way to incorporate how they can learn, like put more science in there. In science, you do math and you do reading. And then you do experiments. And then you can plant. And then you can do things. We can incorporate a little bit of these aspects into the curriculum; it might work a little easier. We have coordinators that I would have on my calendar to talk to. Say, did you go to the school? Did you get this going? Or the committee. Whoever would be selected. It's not always just me probably. But I would be interested in helping out and making sure it's done.*

Janet Ryan, District 6: *First of all, it is up to each school to use the funds as they decide to. And so, it is not coordinated centrally and it was never intended to be. I just wanted to clear that up. Ahwahnee School is a shining example of how things can get done. I was talking to some people over at food services at one time, and we were just chatting about the possibility of doing some recycling of the materials and the food that's left over. And I was told at that time, well you can't really do that, because then the school site has to hire somebody to oversee it. Well no, they don't. At Ahwahnee School, they have two kids that are selected each week to monitor the bins. And they oversee the kids scraping their own plates. They put the refuse into one place and the recyclables into another. They take the refuse and they have a compost pile. And they're growing their own compost for use on their garden. And they're growing fruits and vegetables in their garden. And they were so excited the last time I was there, because the radishes had come up. So it can be done.*

Paul Garcia, District 2: You know you give the power to the schools and others to utilize this money without any Board approval or input. *But I still feel that there needs to be some collaboration between the site and the district to oversee that this money is spent. There should be a district coordinator that they would have to pay from the district funds to oversee this program. I don't believe in the site doing whatever they feel like. I think it's the District that should be involved in making sure that this money is spent on, on whatever it may be - a garden grant, or what they're going to be growing there.*

Esmeralda Diaz, District 2: Because it's only one minute, I'm going to say this. I agree with, what Paul Garcia said. And also something that we can do is education. Everybody here is saying that everything is started from our home. In March, we have the (Food Service) tasting of food. Maybe something that we can do as well to teach our parents is, not to let the district, especially, let the kids to taste the food in March and then, they decide how it's going to be the lunches during the school year. *I think that is wrong. The ones who should be testing the food and saying who is, what kind of food is good for the kids, that would be us, he parents. Because if the kids are given a candy, or an apple, believe me, they are going to pick the, the candy. Even though, when we tell them, the apple is better, he's going to pick the candy. So it's something that we have to do. I really hope that you give us the opportunity as parents, to be participating in the Board because we are aware of everything that is happening at the, the Fresno Unified. Thank you.*

Larry Moore, District 2: Thank you. I noticed that we have a new person, Mr. Herzog out here, if you want to know what to do about physical education in the School District, he has dedicated his whole

life and career to finding ways of how we can improve the health and physical education of our children. Hiring a Coordinator (and we have a great one in Mrs. Hartounian, who was a P.E. teacher at Computech) is all well and good. And that's a great step. *But you have to put resources into it. And currently, the schools and the school site councils, the focus is student achievement and test scores. That comes from the school Board and the superintendent. And everything is geared to that. Things like physical education, health, are always put on the back burner. And schools do not have control over most of these categorical funds that goes to the school site council. The superintendent, because of No Child Left Behind, has the authority to have a district-wide student achievement plan. And the district tells them primarily, how they will spend their money. And they're not telling them to spend their money on physical education. They're telling them to spend it on consultants, on literacy coaches, to support everything is driven by test scores. If you want to improve health and physical education, you have to make it a priority. And you have to put resources in to doing that.* Thank you.

Manuel Nunez, District 2: First of all, let me be clear about something. *I have been a supporter of No Child Left Behind in its concept. It says that every child shall be taught. And it's our obligation as a school district to teach every child that comes through our doors, regardless of their ethnicity, their language difficulties, their disabilities, or whatever. The act is in the process of being refined. But I don't know if it's going to be refined enough to where the tail doesn't wag the dog. And determines what we're going to teach and how we're going to teach. As far as the agriculture project, I learned about it several years ago and I started getting information from it and passing that information onto the schools. One of our schools, for example, Turner, had a fantastic garden. Because they had a good teacher that was involved in it. But you don't have the same kinds of teachers that have that kind of dedication to a garden and helping kids develop it, so that's the other side of the coin. You got the money. But you have to have the staff that's willing to do it.*

Natalie Clark, District 5: Well, *I've actually been trying to help coordinate this garden grant. One of the things that I realize is that this grant needs to include a person paid to coordinate this. With any grant, you can't do it by somebody who's volunteering. It just doesn't end up working out a hundred percent. So to get the most bang for your buck, I think the grant, especially a big grant like this, needs to have administrative time or coordinating time written into the grant to help. There are schools that have great gardens like Ahwahnee, and I can't wait to go see it. If they've got compost, I think that's great. But there are schools that are planting pansies and things. And so a good coordinator would help with every school and figure out what would work with this school. Maybe a full blown garden is not going to work at every single school. But a good coordinator, might say let's do a container pot in one of the class rooms and that might work. And get some educational books that would help and that might start the kids and the teachers getting excited about it. But a key is the Coordinator.*

Carol Mills, District 5: Thank you. As Janet indicated, *these grants were designed to be one-time monies and they were allocated to individual schools. The other thing is, the name garden grants, is a little bit of a misnomer because the grant was designated for campus beautification. This can include a garden, but can also include a wide variety of other things. And many of the campuses, because this was one-time money and not available for a second time, and not available to be sustainable, used it for one-time type of campus beautification projects. So, some of them are gardens. Some of them are other types of things such as, you know, planters or quads and things like that. I think that, you know, the gardens are wonderful when there is a desire on the part of the staff and the students to do that. But it does take a lot of time and energy. And it takes the involved teacher going above and beyond in order to sustain that, if that's what the school chose to do.* Thank you.

Summary of Audience Questions for the Candidates

Edie Jessup: Thank you for moderating, Reyna. We have a lot of questions from the audience. And Because of time I am going to name several facets and major themes of the questions, and ask you to pick out the question/issue that you would like to respond to. *Before the election we will type up all these questions and get them to you for your consideration.*

Some of the themes that we heard today were that parents are the key. If you could context 'parents as key to student health' with the poverty issues, what is happening with the economy, the fact that our neighborhoods, if you look at the Photovoice, project demonstrates that that access and

that choice of food and safe activity does not always exist for families. Meanwhile, the kids spend about eight hours a day at school. It's a good place for the modeling to occur and for the healthy access to occur for children. That is one issue that we have several questions around.

Because of the poverty in our School District, many of our schools are Provision 2 Schools, where all kids get to eat free and the federal government has a reimbursement rate. Because of the demographics of our district, there is the potential for our whole district to go Provision 2, which would mean that all children could eat breakfast and lunch and have snacks in after school activities. Given the obesity rates and the health issues, this is something that some people would like for you to consider and whether you would support a District Provision 2 waiver.

We have many questions about the Garden Grants. We talked about the fact that staff often is not available for implementing the grants. However, there are community resources. And we are sure that the community would like to step up and assist individual schools, given that so many of our parents are agrarian immigrants to this country, who have expertise, who know how to grow food. This may be a way of engaging parents in both the health of their children and supporting their schools. How do you feel about this kind of parent involvement, where they are really the experts, and giving their kids to be something proud of with their parents?

Would you commit to an FUSD Employee Wellness Policy, so that your teachers and classified staff were also benefitting and demonstrating good health to the students? There are questions on air quality, diversity, and parent participation.

Because of time please give us a two minute summary of what you have heard from each other and the question themes I have mentioned. Incumbent Board Members will go first, due to a FUSD Board Workshop.

Closing Statements by the Candidates

Janet Ryan, District 6: *As far as the FUSD Employee Wellness Policy, I'm very much in favor of that. And in many ways, we do have it. The Joint Health Management Board is staffed by employee groups and the management. They have a marvelous newsletter that comes out quite frequently. There's marvelous information in there about wellness and keeping yourself healthy and exercise and eating and the kinds of things you should do to, for prevention of illness. That's run under our Health Insurance Program. I read it from cover-to-cover every time it comes. The idea of using community resources and some of the parents and family members of the students who have agrarian backgrounds, I think is a wonderful idea. And I would be very excited to explore that. I believe very much in parent involvement and having parents come to the front and do many things at the schools. Sometimes parents get involved and of course, most of them work. Both mother and father, any more. That relates to the economy and there could be a lot of people out of work. I know there are in my family. And so, that is going to be a problem. Parents I believe are the key to the children's success. And we can do only so much at school. We can give them healthy food. We can get them 30 minutes of P.E. But if, when they come home from school, the parents let them sit in front of the TV for several hours, or in front of the video game, eating junk food, there's not much we can do about that. So maybe what we need to do as a community is start to educate the parents and encourage the parents to go out for walks with their children, as one of the panelists said they do, and that sort of thing. Because we cannot expect the schools to educate the children and also take care of all of these other needs. It's just impossible without the help of the community and the parents.*

Carol Mills, District 6: *I'll also start with the Employee Wellness Policy. I think that would be a wonderful type of policy to have as an encouragement. I think we have to be careful if we're mandating certain things. There are some legal restrictions on that. But it has been shown that when you have a Wellness Policy that encourages the employees, it tends to lead to a healthier lifestyle for them, and lower health care costs for the, for the district or for the employer. I think the Board should also include itself in that. We should be setting an example in modeling the behaviors that we would be expecting of employees and students. With respect to the garden grants, I think, if it is in fact a garden, I think using community resources and all the parents that we have as Edie indicated, who perhaps are immigrants, who come from agrarian background; these people can certainly teach a lot of these skills to our students and probably to our staff. I don't know about all of the staff. But you*

know I did not grow up on a farm. I grew up in a working-class household in a city. So we didn't necessarily have the garden. And that would be something that would be wonderful to learn. With respect to the food that the students are getting, the question was put in the context of poverty and the economy; I do understand how difficult it is. I mean the economic times now are extremely depressed. And I know people are very worried about their income and about their ability to make ends meet. *And we already have almost 82 percent of our students living in poverty. But it is fortunate that we do provide a healthy breakfast. We do provide a healthy lunch. Our students can get two good healthy meals a day, five days a week. And in the summer, there is the school lunch, or the summer lunch program. It'd be nice if we could have more input into what is going on in the homes. That's an education process of trying to teach the students to make good choices and help educate the parents to make good choices. And that involves the whole community in that educational process.* Because we can't dictate what goes on in the home. We can only encourage.

Manuel Nunez, District 2: I just wanted to inform the other candidates that there is a two o'clock workshop on the second-language learner program with the district. So, if they're interested in learning more about it and what we're doing, they should try to attend. There are a lot of things that we're doing and things that we could more of. But at the same time, some of the things that we try to do lately, in the last two or three years, is *more community involvement*. Now, *when we need physical exams for our athletes, a lot of doctors will step in and provide those physical exams free of charge*, so that students are not prevented from involving themselves in athletics. If an elementary school wants to have a volleyball team or something like that, *we provide any teacher that wants to do that, as an extra pay contract, so that they can go ahead and get paid for the time that they're doing this*. And that's the same thing goes with other, other programs that we have. The after school program we have in all the schools in collaboration *with the City Recreation Department, is a fabulous way for students to be involved in the after-school programs*. But I see many, many students at the schools after three o'clock, engaged in physical activity. So there are things that we're doing. We have a lot of nurseries in Fresno. And if we can provide medical doctors with a way of getting involved with our students in some way, it wouldn't be hard to ask the *nursery owners to see if they would like to volunteer some time to help a school in their area*, to get a garden program started. Now I noticed that, for example, Jackson Elementary School has a very limited area, so that it would be difficult for them to set aside very much of a way of a garden.. But, there are other things that can be done instead of. *So we have been trying to utilize the community more in terms of getting involved with the schools in some way so that they can provide their expertise. And I'll be more than happy to take any suggestions from anybody that has ideas along that line.*

Eddie Jessup: Thank you Manuel. Thank you to the Incumbent School Board Members. I understand that you have a workshop at 2pm. Thank you very much for attending and for your service.

Natalie Clark, District 5: As far as an FUSD Employee Wellness Policy, there was just an article in today's Fresno Bee about a company that has instituted a Wellness Policy and there are less sick days. Employees are more productive. I exercise regularly and try to eat right. When I fall off of my schedule, I know I don't feel as good. I'm more tired, I'm more irritable. *I think an Employee Wellness Policy would be great*. There's uh, at my work, there's a couple of guys who ride their bikes to work. Wow, I mapped out my route to work. I only had a six-mile ride. So I got tuned up and rode my vintage bike to work and, and I felt great about it. So now there are four of us who ride our bikes to work. And we try to do it a couple of times a week. . So an employee Wellness Policy is awesome. *The garden grant. I think field trips to schools that have existing gardens for other schools that are thinking about it, I think would be an excellent thing.* That's how you get excited about that. See *how it's working already. Don't reinvent the wheel.* It's working somewhere. Go and take a look at it. See how it's working. *Partner with the Hmong Garden.* Go and visit it. See how they're working. What is working or not working about it? What can you learn? I think that's very important. I'm a very involved parent. My son's preschool, I'm trying to help change the food policy there. I pack both of my kid's lunch every day. And at the preschool that he goes to, there's been some resistance. It's different. It's, well the other kids don't have the same thing. I'm helping in their parent groups, talk about it. Fruit snacks that you feed your kids that are pre-packaged are not really fruit. *So it's just*

changing your culture.

Virginia Hermosillo, District 6: You know, a lot of the schools, especially in the north of the city, we have a very *high transfer of student rate. When you have that, we are having extreme difficulties with the PTA, Site Council and everything else, to get parents involved.* We've incorporated whatever we can do. Science night, to try and get these parents involved. We talk to kids. I go in the class rooms and talk to them about healthy living. I go in there and talk to them about the science. I go in there and talk to them about arts. And they go home with papers to help. Second issue is, *most parents are Spanish or Hmong. They don't read English. So we need to make sure we have adequate staff around to do that, the translations. Workshops are something that a lot of parents are asking for.* Parents want to come to learn how to speak, how to read, how to work with the kids, what's going on in the schools. *It hasn't been happening.* So that's one issue I do want to take on, that we can start working with the parents that way. *The Wellness Program. I agree with it. I am a diabetic. I eat fairly healthy. I changed medicines. The doctors changed me on medicines, so I gain weight, I lose weight. I gain weight, I lose weight. But I try to eat healthy all the time. And like I said, we've lived pay check to pay check. Sometimes we barely get enough food for the week. Other times we've got plenty. So I know how these parents are thinking.* Trying to make sure they had food in the cupboard at least. *I did notice at three elementary schools so far, is when they get their lunch, they're tossing it.* They don't want to eat it. *Especially the cheese products. The quesadillas, the Chinese egg roll. I know exactly what day it is when I walk in halfway through lunch, just by looking at the trash can. Salads are about that big for the kids. So that's not even an option for them. It's not even enough for them to really eat. They'll eat the apple. They'll eat the cookie. They'll eat the cupcake. The rest is thrown. So we need to find a way that it's appetizing to them, to help them eat. I know it's healthy. But we've got to teach them how to eat these things.* Put some dressing on it. Put something on it.

Larry Moore, District 2: *Many years ago in Fresno Unified, we did have a Wellness, Program. We used to have a truck that came around and gave a whole set of physical, medical tests to employees.* There were discounts for going to certain athletic things. It was a pretty extensive program, plus on weekends, we had events where you'd come in and have your blood pressure, etcetera. Over the years, that went away, for the most part. *Fortunately now, in Fresno Unified, we have a Monthly managed health plan. Which means it's no longer managed by the district solely. It's a jointly managed program with all of the employees and the school district working in partnership. And wellness is something they are working on and they are in the process of developing an extensive wellness plan. Because that saves money in the long run.* I want to just switch real quick here and put my teacher hat on for a second. We talk about grants and the garden grant, which is a great thing. But let's look at the *reality that's happening in our schools today in Fresno. We're the poorest, if not the poorest school district, in the United States. Eighty percent of our students are on student lunch. We have tremendous challenges, even on our elementary schools. We have gang activity. We have discipline problems. We, as teachers are overwhelmed with paper work and testing and at the end of the day, they're exhausted.* And what happens in education is that the *school district, at the higher level, they apply for grants. They get a grant. The schools don't know anything about it. They hire a coordinator. In this case, they didn't even hire a coordinator. They hire a coordinator, and they tell you here's this money. Implement this grant. And it overwhelms the schools.* And that's kind of what's going on. So if you wonder why aren't they using this is great money, they have these great opportunities. Why isn't this being implemented? *Well, you know, that grant did not come from many of these schools. The schools that have gardens are ones that generated in them, themselves probably first. So we have to be a little bit careful about judging our schools with whether they do all these things. Believe me, go to your schools and find out, because it is not the same as when you and I were in elementary school. It's different. And a lot of challenges. I believe we have to return decision makers, decision making, to those local schools and engage those parents.* Because if we do a better job of involving parents, then their children's education will improve. All of these things will be better. *But if all decisions come from the top down, that doesn't involve parents.* And we're on the wrong track.

Esmeralda Diaz, District 2: Because I am one parent. I am a worker as well. I do work for the IRS here

in Fresno. Right now I am a seasonal worker. So they just let us go like a week ago. Of the things I noticed since I started participating in the school, *is that no communication between administrators at any level. In any level, teachers, site administrators, Board. None of that is happening.* I am a doctor. So living healthy is one of my biggest concerns. A lot of the parents, they started now going to the meetings because we are only giving information in graphics; they do not understand. Believe me. And it's only in math and English. They don't understand. As an elect president, is start talking to the parents, see which ones they're concerned, and try to teach them. In one of the schools, we have already classes for Nutrition. Because they were very interest in that type of classes. *When you are doing something for your kids that is going help the teacher and the Fresno Unified. Believe me, because the scores, they go higher if our kids are healthy.* Because I am a doctor, and I have the license as well, I made a diet with one nutritionist here. *We did physical tests for all the parents. We are working on a diet as a group. And we're doing exercise. And we try to make our kids to participate with that. So we, we are very important in the district. We as the parent.* And if we work with the district, believe me, we do our job. *Remember, it's administrators, teachers, parents and the students. One of them is not working.* Thank you.

Paul Garcia, District 2: I think this Policy of Wellness, is good if it's followed through. *It's not going to work if people are not held accountable. I believe that healthy students will do better.* But I think *it's the parent involvement that needs to be also the back bone of it.* Being an alumni from Roosevelt High School, I remember several years ago, when I attended, our coaches used to tell all the athletes what to eat, and everything that we had to go through in order to be healthy and strong. Not only for the sports, but also for the academics. I'm still a strong believer of it. And I will tell you, *if you never visit the schools to see what is going on, I invite you to see it.* I have been involved at the elementary, middle school and high-school level. I encourage, for all of you, to see what is going on, and to see *if this policy is even being implemented.* As far as the grant is concerned, *I wrote a grant for beautification and gardening in two elementary schools in the Calwa area. Matter of fact, they didn't hire no coordinator or anything. I have a non-profit organization, The Concerned Citizens of Calwa. And actually, we were the ones, the volunteers and parents, that went out there and did that.* I think that doing something for your school and giving something back so the kids can see that. *I see a lot of food being wasted. To me, that's taxpayer's money. The other thing too, is that you have a committee that oversees this, the types of food that they're serving our kids. I think that those people need to be either replaced, or put some new ones in.* Also, schools need to be referring parents that don't have the money to buy all these nutrition foods to resources in the community. There are services. There's churches. There's other organizations that will give the food for free. *I think the district needs to promote more resources for our parents.* Thank you.

Edie Jessup: I want to thank all of you for your participation. Metro will get the individual questions to the Candidates and the Forum Participants. I appreciate the Candidates service and your commitment to kids and their good health. We hope that you will take advantage of the community resources if you are elected, because there are resources that are ready for you. Reyna Villalobos, who was your moderator, with the CCROP, the Obesity Prevention Project, has a Physician Champion group: physicians anxious to come to schools and talk to kids and parents about how they can be healthier. And we appreciate your outreach to our kids and serving our community. Thank you very much.

Specific Questions for the FUSD School Board Candidates from the Audience:

1. **We keep hearing “parents are the key.” Are the parents aware the FUSD Wellness Policy? If not what are you planning to do to actually get the parents involved in implementing the wellness policy?**
2. **How would you go about making sure schools meet their PE minute requirements? You can talk about how you think it’s important, but I want to know what actions you will take.**
3. **Many of you talk about parents playing a key role in the health of students. What are your ideas that you would implement to educate the community as a whole and assure they are making healthier changes in their lifestyle?**
4. **Are teachers giving out candy as a positive payment? They are not setting a good example if so; students should not be paid or bribed to do their school work. I want your opinion on this.**
5. **What policies or programs would you support to promote healthy eating in the schools, such as; school lunch, school breakfast, farmers markets on site, or school gardens?**
6. **There is not a PTA at my daughter’s high school. They have a school site council, which I’ve applied for and haven’t heard anything back? There is a lack of opportunity for parents to be involved with the school, with-out even having a PTA!**
7. **Manuel; Air quality affects participants in school activities, what will you do to see that PE minutes are accomplished? Will you see that all schools fly AQ flags every day?**
8. **At each of the schools I see the pillars of character, which the students are expected to understand and follow. They need a strong example of a teacher to guide them. Teachers need to put the kids first, not just their test scores! Kids are more than their intelligence; they are emotional, physical beings. They need to be approached as a whole person, shouldn’t they?**
9. **How can school lunches be made more edible for the students? They ought to be able to make healthy suggestions on what they eat! My grandson refuses to eat the school lunch, so I have to take him to KFC, Rally’s, or McDonald’s for lunch instead, why is that?**
10. **There are no healthy options being offered after hours at school functions. When specifically asked, I was told that the health policies were suspended after school hours, because of lack of funds. I’ve even been told stories of school teachers selling candy bars from their desk after school hours, to supplement and raise money for class projects. I know for sure that there are no healthy options offered at Hoover-High, but are there any offered at schools in Clovis High?**
11. **Being this is a *Nutrition Forum*, how supportive are you to continue good healthy foods for our children?**
12. **Mr. Garcia; Do you believe that unions should have little or no input in elections?**
13. **Natalie; How do you feel on having or establishing school gardens at every school? We understand that monies have been given, but there aren’t any coordinators to see the project through?**
14. **Is experience a necessary requirement to serve on the school board?**

15. **FUSD is a diverse district; how do you plan to assure the cultural and religious diversity is not infringed upon?**
16. **There would be more participation in school sports if it were counted as physical education. Why aren't sports counted as physical education?**
17. **Do you all believe in Sex Education in our schools? Then you should teach contraception.**
18. **All candidates; Are you for firing Michael Hanson?**
19. **Would you commit to an employee Wellness Policy to be developed within the next year?**

The next Community Hunger and Nutrition Forum will be held Wednesday, November 8, 2008, here at Trinity Lutheran Church. Topic: Food and Religious Traditions, Charity and World Hunger. Featuring *Bread for the World* and a discussion of **Religious Responses to Hunger post Election.**

The Hunger and Nutrition Forums are Sponsored by Fresno Metro Ministry

And Supported by: The California Endowment, Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Project; Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger; The Ca. Department of Health Services, Network for a Healthy California/Ca. Association of Food Banks Nutrition Education and Food Stamp Outreach; Ca. Food Policy Advocates; and individual and congregational contributors to the work of Fresno Metro Ministry