



## Press Release

**For Immediate Release**  
March 6, 2015

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### Lynwood Community Unites to Launch Program to Serve Local Youths of Color

Local Action Summit a Response to Obama's 'My Brother's Keeper'

**Lynwood, Calif.** – Leaders from Lynwood's school district, city, business and nonprofit sectors last week took part in a local action summit kicking off The Village Project, a program aimed at coordinating local resources to break down barriers to success for young men and women of color. The coalition was envisioned by Lynwood Unified Board of Education Vice President Gary Hardie, Jr, in partnership with Lynwood Mayor Jose Luis Solache, as a response to President Barack Obama's "My Brother's Keeper" initiative, a call to action to communities across the country to expand opportunities for youths of color.

"When President Obama launched his initiative, I felt that this was something we needed to do right here in Lynwood," Hardie said. "Working with the city and the school district to organize The Village Project has allowed us to create a dialogue between our entire community, at all levels. Today's students are tomorrow's leaders and we must help them develop the skills and confidence they need to succeed."

The Village Project launched in partnership between Lynwood Unified, the City of Lynwood, the Lynwood Unified District African American Parent Advisory Council (DAAAPC), the California Association of African American Superintendents and Administrators (CAAASA) and the Greater Emmanuel Temple. The event began with a press conference and an introduction from Lynwood Unified Superintendent Paul Gothold.

"This is a collaborative effort that ensures our students will have additional support and resources to help them succeed in their academics, their future careers, and in life," Gothold said. "As a school district, it is our mission to educate students and prepare them to be productive members of society. However, it would be impossible for us to reach our goals without the dedication of our partners – our parents, teachers, staff, city and broader community."

After the Lynwood Middle School Performing Arts Club performed the national anthem, Hardie introduced Lynwood Mayor José Luis Solache, who spent 10 years on the Lynwood Unified School District Board of Education.

"I was once a youth in this community and someone believed in me," Solache said. "As leaders in this community, it is our job to give back and continue to invest in tomorrow's leaders and believe in them."

**The Lynwood Unified School District** is dedicated to offering students a world-class education to prepare them for success in college and career in the 21st century. Under its Achieving Greatness Initiative, the district is realigning all aspects of its organization to strengthen and expand instructional programs, enrichment and extracurricular activities, and support systems for students and staff. For more information, visit [www.lynwood.k12.ca.us](http://www.lynwood.k12.ca.us).

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Mayor Solache recently participated in the 2015 National Conference of Mayors in Washington D.C., where he attended President Obama's Initiative My Brother's Keeper Task Force.

"It was an honor to be a part of a City whose school district had already responded to the President's Call to Action for Youth. With the school district's Village Project, our school district is ahead of the game. It made me so proud to know that we addressing an issue that is being addressed on a national level across the country to uplift our youth and guide them in the right direction and make sure that opportunities are afforded to them as they are to everyone else. As leaders today, it is our job to hold the doors or opportunity open for our leaders of tomorrow and I'm glad to be a part of a City Council that fully supports its school district on this issue. Our youth need to be reminded that anything is possible; their dreams are our dreams."

Mary Ransom, President of the District African American Advisory Parent Council (DAAAPC), described her goals for extending opportunities through the Black Teen Summit, which was held in conjunction with The Village Project launch. More than 280 Lynwood teens participated in the day-long activities of the summit, which included motivational speaker Erick Cork from Dallas, Texas. This year's summit promoted rebuilding writing skills for preparation of the upcoming Common Core State Standards (CCSS) testing in the spring. In conjunction with the teen summit, the District African American Advisory Parent Council (DAAAPC) added parent workshops to empower and inspire parents to become advocates for their children.

"The Black Teen Summit is all about creating opportunities for our students," said Ransom. "I am so proud of our students and of the District African American Advisory Parent Council (DAAAPC). We are here to support them and provide every chance for them to succeed in their dreams and goals. That is why we are providing something new this year – parent workshops – so that we can also support other parents as they provide guidance for their children."

Nisan Stewart, a Grammy-nominated producer, musician, and pastor of Lynwood's Greater Emmanuel Temple, shared his church's efforts to build a new youth center to serve the community's children through free counseling, tutoring services and music lessons. Lynwood student Alaija Moore bestowed her personal story and underscored the importance of a solid education and strong support systems and resources.

Following the press conference, representatives from across the community and from local, state and federal elected offices, including the African-American Liaison from the office of U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, the office of U.S. Rep. Janice Hahn, the office of State Sen. Ricardo Lara, the office of Assemblyman Anthony Rendon and the office of Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, took part in a roundtable discussion in which they assessed the needs of Lynwood's youth, identified priorities and crafted a plan to continue to invest in tomorrow's leaders.

"The Village Project accentuates the value of the District's commitment to high-quality education and outreach," said Board President Maria G. Lopez. "By contributing District resources and partnering with the Lynwood community, we create additional opportunities that enhance what we are doing inside of our classrooms and on our school campuses."

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### PHOTO CAPTIONS

**VILLAGEPROJECT1:** Lynwood Unified, in partnership with the City of Lynwood, the District African American Parent Advisory Council (DAAAPC), California Association of African American Superintendents and Administrators (CAAASA), launched The Village Project on Feb. 26 in response to President Barack Obama’s My Brother’s Keeper initiative. Pictured from left, is Lynwood Unified Superintendent Paul Gothold, Board Vice President Gary Hardie, Jr., Lynwood Mayor Jose Luis Solache, Lynwood Unified Board Member Alma-Delia Renteria, Board Member Alfonso Morales, Esq. and Aide Castro, a Lynwood City Councilmember who attended the event on behalf of Assemblyman Anthony Rendon.

**VILLAGEPROJECT2:** The Village Project was launched Feb. 25 to serve Lynwood’s youths of color. The launch event was held in conjunction with the Lynwood Unified and the District African American Parent Advisory Council (DAAAPC)’s second annual Black Teen Summit, which seeks to provide motivation, job and life skills and college-going resources for Lynwood’s teens.

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