

Inglewood News

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Inside This Issue

Certified & Licensed Professionals	7
City Council	3
Classifieds	3
Entertainment	2
Food	5
Hawthorne Happenings ...	3
Lawndale	4
Legals	6,7
Pets	5

District Students Take to the Air



Selected middle and high school students from the Inglewood Unified School District and Centinela Valley Union High School District partook in a two-week program with the National Summer Transportation Institute (NSTI), offered by the College of Engineering, Computer Science, and Technology at Cal State LA from June 27 through July 15. The students flew airplanes after learning about the transportation industry. The program concluded with a graduation dinner Monday, July 15. Photo: South Bay Workforce Investment Board

Pullen-Miles Takes His Role as Mentor Like a True Father Figure

By Haleemon Anderson

Lawndale Mayor Robert Pullen-Miles books a casual photo shoot and makes plans to take along his youngest daughter, a budding photographer. Sienna, 10, will get to snap a few shots under the watchful eye of a professional photographer, who just happens to be the mayor's neighbor.

The mayor is big on this type of mentoring. In fact, he has emerged as a go-to advisor for a number of local women in their political careers. Pullen-Miles says this penchant for mentoring female candidates developed organically. "When I first started in politics, most of the people who helped me along the way were women," said Pullen-Miles. He mentions Gardena civic leaders Laverne Knight and Ethel Barnes as early advisors.

He spent seven years under the tutelage of the late Jenny Oropeza, a beloved local leader. "I had the opportunity to work for her in the assembly and the senate," he said. "I was on her staff when I ran for Lawndale [City Council]."

He says moving from staff to an elected office widened his perspective. "A lot of my support came from women... so when other people came on the scene, I gravitated to them naturally," said Pullen-Miles. I didn't come into it saying, 'I'm going to help women.' It just shaped up that way."

Indeed, Pullen-Miles' influence has helped shape the careers of a number of local women in all facets of political engagement. Melissa Ramoso, a councilmember in the city of Artesia, says his friendship was really inspiring in her early campaign. "When I first ran five years ago, he came to my kick-off," she said.

It's very supportive to have a colleague come out for you like that."

"She's a go-getter," said Pullen-Miles. Ramoso was unsuccessful in her first council bid, but Pullen-Miles had her back. "We knew she just needed to hang in there. What I admired about her, she's a fighter. She didn't give up."

Ramoso was elected to the Artesia City Council last year in an historic bid, as the first woman on the board. After a career spanning 14 years at the federal and state level, Pullen-Miles said he always knew Ramoso would be an elected official.

Ramoso added that Pullen-Miles is always available when she needs advice. "I have known him to be personable and knowledgeable in our field of public service," she said. "He is always willing to help you find a solution to any issue at hand."

Christina Carroll, a recent Lawndale transplant, is just beginning her civic career. A true "military brat," she was born on a naval base in Portsmouth, Virginia. Pullen-Miles appointed Carroll to Lawndale's Parks and Recreation Commission after seeing her at community events. He said Carroll's energy and personality are a perfect fit for that committee. "It puts you directly into the community," he said.

Pullen-Miles believes Carroll has the right composure to eventually hold public office. "She's another young woman who is very tenacious," he said. "She's taken a leadership role on the commission. While she's figuring out what she wants to do, I've told her to just enjoy the journey."

City commissioners in Lawndale serve in volunteer positions, as does the mayor. Carroll juggles various paying gigs around the

South Bay, including hosting duties at several restaurants.

Pullen-Miles holds a full-time staff position as the district director for Assemblywoman Autumn Burke. It's in this capacity that he met yet another mentee, Inglewood School Board member Dionne Faulk. Ms. Faulk was working with Burke's staff when she met Pullen-Miles. They've been friends ever since, he said, consulting back and forth on special projects and important events to attend.

Already super engaged in the community, Faulk had experience working with unions, sororities and the national education organization, Jack and Jill of America, Inc. She sat on the advisory board for Measure GG. That successful initiative brought \$90 million in state funded new construction and modernization projects for Inglewood schools. Prior to that, Faulk was employed for over 13 years at the Consumer Affairs Department, in the Bureau of Real Estate.

Having lost her first election for Inglewood School Board, Ms. Faulk had something in common with Ms. Ramoso. She also turned to Mayor Pullen-Miles for advice. "The mayor recommended events, activities and to-do tasks to enhance my political knowledge and experience," said Faulk. "He walked the district with me when I was campaigning. He has always been very supportive."

With her two children attending Inglewood schools, Faulk knew she wanted to be in a position to make change. "I wanted to help make the schools better. I thought, what better way to get involved with the district," said Faulk.

See Pullen-Miles, page 7

Weekend Forecast

Friday
Sunny
77°/67°



Saturday
Sunny
77°/68°



Sunday
Mostly Sunny
78°/66°

