Exciting New Partnership

An exciting new partnership between NUSD (Novato Unified School District) and MCFL (Marin County Free Library) is moving forward! In early February the Marin County Board of Supervisors approved an agreement between NUSD and MCFL for a School Community Library partnership. The School Community Library will be located on C Street in Hamilton Field, Novato. The agreement was developed in active collaboration between NUSD and MCFL that started in August 2013 and it aligns directly with the Library’s strategic plan which was developed with broad community input over the same time period.

The School Community Library will first and foremost double the current space of the South Novato Library from 3,000 square feet to 6,000 square feet. It is an excellent example of government agencies working collaboratively for a common community purpose. The proposed location will create a learning center with two additional buildings, also totaling 6,000 square feet, operated by NUSD that will offer educational and community programs to the Novato community. This provides 12,000 square feet of new space dedicated to formal education and lifelong learning for the community.

The agreement rests on the foundation of NUSD’s desire to promote the development of 21st Century skills in students by entering into a collaborative arrangement where the Library, in partnership with the District, operates a community library facility to provide programs and services to support the public education program. It is the intention that NUSD and MCFL will develop and plan a longer-term arrangement where a permanent library facility is constructed on the site and/or on the adjacent parcel. This plan makes the library an integral part of the future community education center.

In addition to supporting NUSD’s educational goals, the partnership specifically supports MCFL strategic plan goals, the Board of Supervisors 4th E (Education) Initiative, as well as efforts to improve equity in Marin County. Positive outcomes for each of the three goals in the MCFL strategic plan include:

1. The partnership supports family literacy and youth development by being the preferred place for children, families and caregivers to connect, learn and grow together. The new location of the School Community Library on C Street is within walking distance from the Novato school, the North Bay Children’s Center and the Novato Charter School.

2. The partnership supports youth in our community with opportunities for self-discovery and expression. This partnership provides incredible opportunity to expand and improve educational opportunities for youth in Novato. In addition to the library facility having dedicated youth area, youth will have access to a model classroom, media center and Makerspace. These facilities will be equipped to support programs that
develop skills in communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking. The model classroom will support teaching and learning for students and teachers and will be open in the late afternoons and evenings for students and families that do not have access to technology on a regular basis. The Makerspace will be a space in which students, teachers, families, and the community may build projects designed as part of class work, community classes, afterschool activities and summertime makerspace camps.

3. The partnership creates a positive environment for mobile and digital literacy by improving access to resources, improved connectivity and availability. The new School Community Library will have better connectivity, dedicated youth technology and use resources from MCFL to promote digital and information literacy for all ages.

This partnership is an innovative approach to reach common goals and could create a model for new ways for school districts, local government and public library systems to aggregate resources to improve educational outcomes and provide better equity to educational resources for all members of the community.

On November 25, 2014 MCFL dedicated $1,485,000 to fund this partnership opportunity for a School Community Library facility for South Novato. The School Community Library is planned to open in late June.

As always, my door is open to you. I welcome your suggestions and ideas. You can reach me at: (415) 473-7331 or jarnold@marincounty.org.