

*\*The following is a copy of remarks given by Dr. Chris Wright to the Hazelwood Community Response Team at a recent meeting.*

Dr. Wright's Hazelwood CRT Roundtable Speech  
April 14, 2008

The support of the community is vital to public schools across the country, no matter the city, county or state. Without backing from the community, the existence of public schools would falter.

The Hazelwood School District is no exception. Without the support of countless volunteers, community groups, service organizations and others, our children, our families and our staff might not be as confident or successful as we are now. It would make the work of public education that much harder if we did not have the support of the communities that we serve.

I can give you many, many examples of how community support has helped the Hazelwood School District, but today, I'll give you just a few.

The most recent and most prominent example of community support is Hazelwood 1<sup>st</sup>. Over a nine-month period in 2003, more than 1,000 people from across the district participated in a decision-making process that will have positive, long-term impacts on our district. Hazelwood 1<sup>st</sup> brought together parents, guardians and grandparents, business leaders, community members, local government officials and District staff members to develop solutions to the challenges of a growing school district.

The citizen-led Hazelwood 1<sup>st</sup> committee studied the concerns of overcrowded schools, the need to improve Missouri Assessment Program, or MAP, scores, and how to best recruit and retain quality teachers, all while accommodating a fast-growing population.

As a result of the community's effort and dedication to the education of our children, Proposition 2 was put before the voters to help our District improve and meet and correct standards set forth by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. As you know, Proposition 2 was approved by our voting patrons and progress is being witnessed throughout the district.

Progress is being realized through the implementation of full-day kindergarten at all 20 elementary schools in the district for the first time in our history; the building and opening of four new middle schools in one academic year. New facilities are currently being built for the GALACTIC gifted elementary program and Hazelwood Central Early Childhood, scheduled to be open and ready for the 2008-2009 year.

Hazelwood 1<sup>st</sup> and the passing of Proposition 2 have also allowed us to expand school libraries and student services space to meet state standards. Twenty-one school sites will benefit from the support of the community.

Relationships with community coalitions are equally important. Our district has maintained a significant partnership with the Community Action Agency of St. Louis County for 10 years. Through counseling services offered by the CAA, we can help our children and families with a range of needs.

North County Churches Uniting for Racial Harmony and Justice supports our students through youth recognition programs, and its essay and oratorical contests allow our students to express their knowledge of history and culture and give them the confidence to speak publicly.

Numerous local chambers of commerce and civic groups provide scholarships to our students, giving them an opportunity to realize a dream of higher education and a strong future.

Through the OASIS Intergenerational Tutoring Program, mature adults are paired with primary grade students to help improve reading and literacy. The district has partnered with OASIS since the mid-1990s and many students have benefited from the one-on-one attention of a caring adult by showing improved self-confidence and a greater interest in reading and enjoying books.

Developing youth leadership and instilling the values of public citizenry are how the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts have an impact on our students.

Expanded after-school programs at each of the six middle schools in the District keep our children actively engaged in safe, stable environments while continuing to pique their interest in academics, athletics and future careers. Through a partnership with the Herbert Hoover Boys and Girls Club, students at Hazelwood Southeast Middle School are able to benefit from the variety of programs and services offered by the club.

Furthermore, People's Health Centers, Inc. provides free immunizations to our students at clinics and school open-house activities throughout the year.

The Spanish Lake Youth Task Force and the Spanish Lake Community Association hosts an annual youth resource fair in the spring to provide area families with information about summer programs and camps.

I've talked a lot about how community agencies provide support to our district, but I also want to share how our district also provides support to the community.

Our high school students learn the value of being a part of the community and doing their part to make an impact through community service. Students are required to complete 50 hours of community service to graduate. Many students put in far more hours and sincerely enjoy giving their time to others.

The Hazelwood School District Community Response Team, or CRT, is highly regarded and necessary to the success of our community. As you know, the CRT is a multi-

disciplinary team of school district staff, service providers and community members working together to assist students and families in need within our district. At any given time, CRT is there whenever a child, a parent or care-giver needs guidance, access to resources or a helping hand.

As I said earlier, I could give you many, many examples of how community support has helped the Hazelwood School District grow and prosper. You would be overwhelmed, just as I have been, with the outpouring of support for our children, our families, our teachers and staff.

Again, the support of the community is vital to all public schools, and it's the same for the Hazelwood School District.

Without your support, our District's vision of being a premier learning community characterized by excellence, equity and high expectation, and our mission of guiding learners on a quest for high standards, fairness and distinguished achievements would be a much more daunting task.

Thank you for being such an integral part of the success of our students, our staff, our leaders and our community.