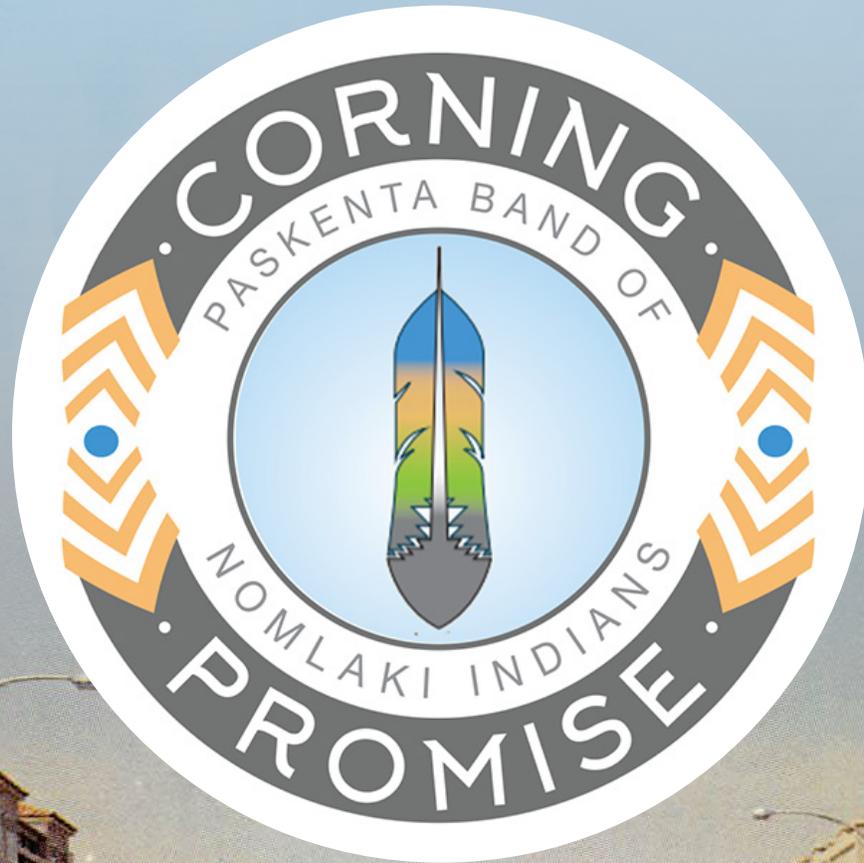


# THE EVERETT FREEMAN PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD



# LEGACY REPORT

# *A Note from Dawna*

*The Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indian Tribe utilized federal and state funding, generously provided by the US Department of Education and the California Department of Social Services, to actualize a collaborative community agenda designed to change the tide for children living in the southern Tehama region. The Tribe, through the Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood (more commonly known as Corning Promise), has worked tirelessly to create conditions and opportunities for children in the region to thrive. This legacy report highlights the community-shared initiatives, partnerships, progress, and stories that have emerged from the collective work.*

*As we reflect on the work that has been accomplished, I am filled with pride and gratitude for the community partners and leaders who have come alongside the Tribe to bring this vision to life.*



## *About the Corning Promise Initiative*

*The Corning Promise initiative, driven by the vision that “All Children will Succeed” was founded in 2017 by the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians. This initiative was created in honor of Everett Freeman, a former Tribal leader whose lifelong commitment to education and community empowerment is at the heart of the Promise. His vision for a thriving and supportive community has inspired, shaped, and guided the transformative effort.*

*Through collaborative efforts with schools, businesses, local government, and community organizations, Corning Promise is working to improve academic and developmental outcomes of children living in the region.*

# PASKENTA BAND OF NOMLAKI INDIANS RECEIVE GRANT FOR CORNING SCHOOLS

The Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians were awarded a more than \$14.6 million Promise Neighborhood Grant on Dec. 20 to be dispersed over the span of five years from the US Department of Education to serve the Corning elementary and high school districts.

The Paskenta will reorganize their community's elementary and high school programs to ensure all students are prepared to master grade-level content, according to a media report by the Department of Education, which awarded five other grants as part of the 2016 Promise Neighborhood competition.

The program was set up to help communities launch, scale and sustain educational supports and community-based services to meet the complex needs of children and families, according to the report. **The program is meant to serve and support at-risk children in these communities.**

Schools that will benefit from the grant are Olive View, Rancho Tehama and West Street elementary schools, Maywood Middle School, Corning High School and Centennial High School.

The Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood Initiative grant will go toward six solutions, or programs, that will significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children and youth within various schools in Corning, said Matthew Russell, grant project director.

Those programs include the Healthy Families America program for ages 0-5, a Research Based Instruction program for kindergarten through eighth grade, Navigate program for high school students, College and Career Readiness program, Life Skills Training for sixth to twelfth grades and a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy program for children and parents, Russell said.

*"The Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians received a smaller grant in 2012 that helped them lay the groundwork for improved outcomes for children and families,"* said Nadya Chinoy Dabby, the US Department of Education's assistant deputy secretary for innovation and improvement. *"We are excited about their continued*

*progress toward establishing high-quality educational, mental health and house services for tribal youth."*

**The Paskenta are the only tribal group to be awarded the grant, Russell said.**

The Healthy Families Program includes working with the Tehama County Health Services Agency for health education purposes, the research program will focus on improving reading, writing and math skills for elementary and middle school students, the Navigate program will aim to create a culture of college preparedness that focuses on academics and post-secondary programs, the Life Skills Training will focus on education about substance abuse and violence prevention and the Cognitive Behavior Program will help fund additional counselors and certified therapists for students who have suffered from trauma and need additional help.

The college and career readiness program will focus on high school seniors, preparing them for future careers and education with extra opportunities while in high school, including increasing the number college counselors.

Russell said **nearly 80 percent of students entering college in the county have to take remedial math and English classes.** These classes could have been taken during high school to be able to move right into college-level classes freshman year of college. The program aims to change that. The first year the tribe will receive \$2,705,168 to disperse to the various schools, the second year \$3,018,516, the third year \$3,054,516, the fourth year \$3,039,518 and the fifth year \$3,039,518. The total amount dispersed will be \$14,657,270.

The Tribal Council pushed hard to get the grant and was instrumental in being awarded this grant, Russell said. The other groups that also played a part in making the grant possible for Corning were the Tehama County Department of Education, Corning Union Elementary School District, Tehama County Health Services Agency, United Youth and Families, River Cities Counseling and Corning Union High School District.

# THE TRIBAL COUNCIL

*The Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians Tribal Council plays an integral role in guiding Corning Promise. Their leadership, vision, and commitment to community-building shape the strategic direction of the initiative. The Tribe works closely with local leaders and community members to ensure efforts are aligned and focused on creating long-term, meaningful change.*

## TRIBAL PARTNERSHIP

*The Legacy of Everett Freeman*

The Corning Promise initiative is rooted in the legacy of Everett Freeman (1931-2010), a dedicated leader and longtime tribal chair who led the effort to regain federal re-recognition after the termination of the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indian Tribe's sovereign status. His vision of reclaiming the Tribe's history, restoring their sovereignty, and building a vision for the future of the people laid the foundation for the Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood (Corning Promise) work. It sparked a broader commitment to advancing the work.

The vision of Everett Freeman to build a better future for all naturally extends to building partnerships - uniting stakeholders, the community, and organization - around

a shared goal of community progress. The Tribe, re-established in 1994, is deeply committed to collaborating with the community to build a strong, sustainable system that empowers children and families, helping them reach their full potential. As we move forward, we continue to focus on creating systems that support not only educational success but the overall well-being of individuals - an approach that encompasses the social, emotional, mental, and physical aspects.

Freeman's legacy is an integral part of the initiative, reminding us that true transformation happens when communities work together to create lasting change.



# THE JOURNEY TO RESTORE A SOVEREIGN NATION

## *Everett Freeman's Promise to Restore the Tribe and Secure its Rightful Lands*

As a young man, the Nomlaki man made a promise to his elder uncles that he would someday reclaim the land that had been taken from the Nomlaki people. Decades later, he did just that.

Born in 1931 in Butte City, California, Freeman was influenced by his grandfather — a medicine man named Andrew Freeman — and his uncles as they traveled the state looking for work during the Dust Bowl years. While Everett didn't finish high school, he taught himself mathematics, reading, and writing.

He proudly enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1949, fighting for a country whose government would later strip his people of their native heritage and sovereignty. Still, Everett refused to leave his native land and would later go to work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), leading projects to build new infrastructure for nearby Rancherias with U.S. government funds.

In 1954, Everett married Pat Hoaglin and spent the next three decades as a family man, raising five children and continuing his work with the BIA until his retirement in 1990. It was then that he began his efforts to regain ownership of the Tribe's aboriginal territory.

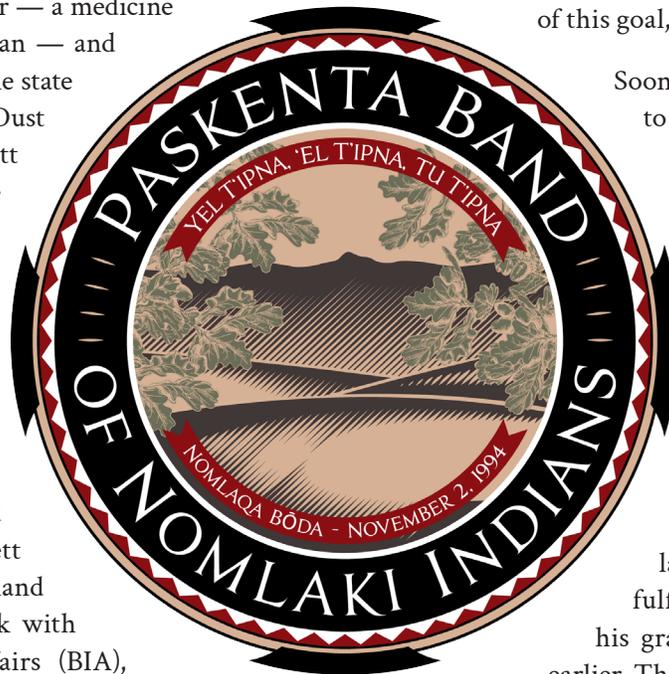
While the effort seemed impossible, Everett was undaunted and dedicated his retirement years to fulfilling the promise of reunification. He was a natural leader who understood the historical, governmental, and Tribal elements at play in the convoluted treaties that left broken promises scattered across the hills of northern California.

Committed to the cause, he connected with Nomlaki members across the country to raise awareness of the effort. Everett, his family, and his friends set up taco and snow cone concession stands at events and traditional gatherings known as Big Times and Pow Wows to raise funds that could support the effort. Word spread of this goal, and it grew into a movement.

Soon, Everett was making trips to Washington D.C. to speak in front of the U.S. Congress on behalf of the Tribe. In Sacramento, he worked with state government representatives to draft a bill in support of the effort and collaborated with California Congressman Vic Fazio to sponsor the Paskenta Band Restoration Act, which was signed into law in 1994. Finally, he had fulfilled the promise he made to his grandfather and uncles decades earlier. The Tribe had its status back.

But that wasn't the end of his work. For the next 16 years, Everett would continue to work on building the sovereign nation, serving as Chairperson of the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians, organizing the community, and, in 2000, buying back 2,000 acres of their aboriginal lands.

His commitment extended beyond the Nomlaki community to its surrounding neighbors and land, with a keen understanding that cooperation and mutual support would raise the standing of all. After he died in 2010, the main road on Paskenta lands was renamed Everett Freeman Way to honor his efforts and share his story.



# TARGET AREA

## CORNING & RANCHO TEHAMA, CALIFORNIA

*Corning Promise focuses its work in Corning and Rancho Tehama, rural areas in southern Tehama County. This initiative benefits not only the children and families living in the region but also students attending the two school districts in the footprint. By strengthening systems through coordinated efforts, aligning efforts of stakeholders, investing in programs, and focusing on long-term change, Corning Promise is creating the conditions for children to succeed.*

### **Backbone Team**

Stewarded by Dawna Shchedrov, the Corning Promise Director, the backbone team is responsible for managing the initiative and ensuring its success. Dawna's leadership is rooted in her belief that collective responsibility is the key to success.

Additionally, Kate & Co. plays a key role in supporting communications and content development, while the Center for Evaluation and Research (CER) supports data collection and evaluation efforts.

Other key staff who have played vital roles as servant leaders include Matthew Russell and Tony Cardenas

### **The Key to a Brighter Future**

The willingness of leaders to collaborate is actualizing the proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." Within that collective effort lies a power that shapes not only the child's future but also works to strengthen the entire community. When we can transform the system and people that hold the power for change, we are creating a future where children's potential is not defined by their zipcodes or circumstances. The investment is leading to meaningful, long-term change in individuals, families, and the community, reducing poverty, fostering growth, improving opportunities, supporting stability, and fostering a culture of aspiration that uplifts.

**Our shared goal is to create a future where all children will have the opportunity to succeed in school and life.**

### **Community: A Collaborative Spirit**

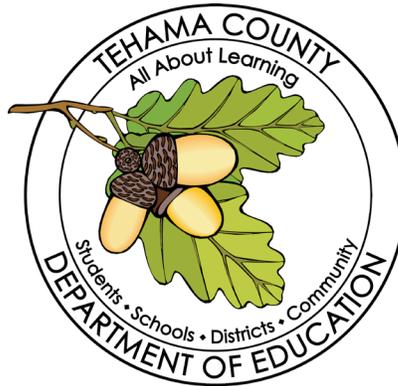
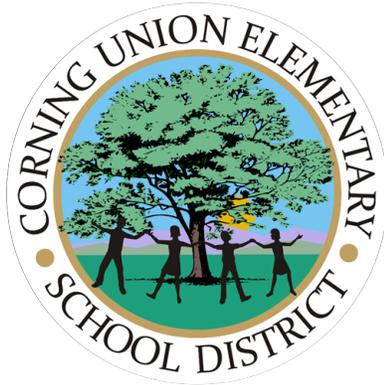
A defining hallmark of Promise Neighborhood is its collaborative approach – not only is it an activity or process, it is a principle that underpins how the entire initiative operates. Corning Promise and its partners have moved beyond basic collaboration and embraced a collaboration culture and mindset where partners are working to align goals and coordinate actions across the community. The spirit of collective action and shared ownership extends beyond Corning Promise; it is woven into the fabric of the community.

**"We're building upon the strengths that we already have."**

**TONY CARDENAS**

As Tony Cardenas, a local servant leader, shares: *"We're building upon the strengths that we already have."*

Through building partnerships with local schools, businesses, and regional organizations, Corning Promise and its partners have amplified their impact – building a united front to address systemic challenges and open doors of opportunity.



## Our Partners

*Corning Promise's success would not be possible without the help of over 20+ dedicated partners. These organizations play an active role in supporting our shared vision and contribute to the initiative's long-term success. Through their collective action, Corning Promise has thrived.*

### ***Partners include:***

- City of Corning
- Corning Union Elementary School District (CUESD)
- Corning Union High School District (CUHSD)
- First 5 Tehama
- Northern California Child Development Inc. (NCCDI)
- River Cities Counseling (RCC)
- Tehama County Department of Education (TCDE)
- Tehama County Health Services Agency (TCHSA)

And many local, regional, and contracted partners who were instrumental in shifting the tide.

# K-12 TARGET RESULTS

*Through an extensive needs assessment and data analysis, Corning Promise is collaborating with partners to address community needs and leverage existing strengths. The goal is to create a sustainable system of support for all students, from kindergarten through high school graduation.*

## ***Key results measured include:***

- Students entering kindergarten ready to succeed
- Academic proficiency in English-language arts (ELA) and Mathematics
- Increased school attendance and reduction in chronic absenteeism
- Four-year cohort high school graduation rates
- Access to post-secondary opportunities (college, certification, etc.)
- Student safety and emotional well-being

As Matthew Russell, another local servant leader, notes: “If you’re going to create sustainability, **you really need to have the different partners own it.**”

## **Early Childhood: Investing in Our Youngest Learners**

Research shows that the early years are vital to a child’s later development because it lays the foundation for cognitive, physical, emotional, and social growth that influences their future learning, well-being, and success. The first years of life are a critical phase when children develop essential skills, and high-quality experiences during the early periods are essential to improving positive outcomes.

Corning Promise has collaborated with local organizations to take key actions to ensure children and families thrive in the early years. The focus of the investments was to improve early literacy and language development, increase the quality of Pre-K programs in the area, support children’s emotional health, align mutually reinforcing Pre-K programs, and build the capacity of caretakers and providers. Corning Promise invested in stronger, healthier, and more resilient community. We are excited to continue this journey together, as we build on the legacy of Everett Freeman and create a future where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

### ***Key Programs (2023 - 2025):***

- Parent education program community Impact Project (Positive Parenting Program)
- Home visiting program offered by First 5 Tehama and TCDE Help Me Grow
- Screening and developmental tracking for children under 5
- Family Support Model offered by resident leaders who connect families to community services and resources
- Capacity development of professionals who serve families with newborn children

### ***Key Programs Prior to 2022:***

- Early Language and Literacy Development Program - focus on creating literacy rich classrooms and improving teacher practices
- Community literacy development activities
- Pre-K educator capacity development
- Home visiting program offered by TCHSA and NCCDI
- Trauma-informed training
- Pre-K Play Therapy
- Horizontal and vertical bridging activities

# EARLY CHILDHOOD SUMMARY & IMPACT REPORT

## *Corning Promise*



### THE REPORT: EARLY CHILDHOOD FOCUS

The Early Childhood Summary & Impact Report summarizes the early childhood component of the cradle-to-career solutions supported by the Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood (“Corning Promise”), a community initiative of the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Tribe. The solutions were implemented in partnership with 11 early childhood organizations between 2017 and 2022. Some activities supported in 2023 are included in this summary report.

### PROMOTING EARLY LEARNING FOR LIFELONG SUCCESS

*Improve* language and literacy  
*Invest* in relationship-building  
*Expand* opportunities & access

*Partner* to build high-quality early learning programs  
*Strengthen* collaborative practices & structures



### *Acknowledgement*

The Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indian Tribe and the Tehama County partners are immensely grateful to the United States Department of Education – Promise Neighborhood for giving us the gift of stewarding a grant that transformed the community with its system-level ambitions and cradle-to-career approach.

# Formal Partnerships

City of Corning \* Northern California Child Development, Inc. (NCCDI) \* River Cities Counseling (RCC) \* Tehama County Department of Education (TCDE), partnered with seven center-based private, state, and Early/Head start programs in Corning \* Tehama County Health Services Agency (TCHSA) \* Center for Optimal Brain Integration \* Tehama County Library

## EARLY LANGUAGE & LITERACY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Corning Promise collaborated with TCDE on the early language and literacy development program design and delivery. TCDE worked with seven center-based pre-K programs to transform them into “Centers of Excellence,” marked by literacy-rich learning environments, quality programs, and instructional practices. The evidence-based strategies employed to turn the curve included utilizing assessments effectively, delivering high-quality instruction, using data to tailor instruction and curriculum, and creating trauma-informed environments. Program design elements included increasing access to literacy material, parent-engagement opportunities, and strengthening relationships. Highly qualified staff from the TCDE-Early Childhood Department worked in partnership with the Pre-K programs to implement activities.

### *Improving* **Literacy Spaces**

TCDE worked with the center-based programs to design literacy-rich spaces - incorporating diverse age-appropriate reading materials, designating reading areas, modeling positive literacy practices, and other practices that make reading and writing a visible part of the classroom and routines.

### *Building* **Educator Capacity**

TCDE equipped educators with skills to foster language and literacy development in children through personalized coaching provided by an Early Learning Coach & Specialist. The Coach/Specialist shared instructional strategies, introduced new curriculum (ZooPhonics, etc.), and shared classroom management strategies. To create optimal learning environments, TCDE contracted with a trauma expert who bridged the PreK educators' knowledge on creating safe environments, fostering positive relationships, utilizing trauma-informed and resilience-building instructional practices, and other supportive information that empowered the educators. Professional Development opportunities were also made available to educators in such topics as Neurobiology of the Brain and Behavior, Trauma Responsive and Resilience Building Practices, The Power to Rewire, Adult Self-Awareness and Self-Care to Prevent Burnout, and many other essential topics.

### *Progress* **Monitoring & Program Improvement**

The Pre-K programs used screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring tools to evaluate change. The tools were crucial for assessing students' knowledge of literacy fundamentals, the quality of the classroom environment, and teacher practices. These assessments included Phonological Awareness Literacy (PALS), the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), and Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO). The ELLCO assessment measures five key areas: classroom structure, curriculum, language environment, books and book reading opportunities, and print and early writing supports. TCDE and the educators analyzed the data to gain insights on the individual, class-wide, and program progress; they used the information to adjust strategies and lesson plans to meet the student's needs and make program improvements.

## EARLY LANGUAGE & LITERACY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM STRATEGIES CONT'D

### *Building* Literacy

CDE created opportunities for families/children to interact with books by placing pre-loaded eReaders (Nooks), loaded with 40 English and Spanish age-appropriate books, in each center's lending library. The Nooks were configured with parental controls and privacy settings; a single administrator manages the devices. Families with children participating in the PreK centers received Raising-A-Reader book bags with four new books each week. The books ranged in developmental levels, topics, and languages. In a single year, the children rotated 100+ multicultural books. Additionally, on several occasions, families had the opportunity to visit Chico State University. The college visits aimed to spark an early interest in learning and were intentionally structured to encourage parent-child conversation with the help of questioning prompts, vocabulary words, and a book selected by the program leads. Pre-pandemic, TCDE collaborated with the PreK educators to organize a learning event where parents and their children engaged in activities promoting learning in various subjects. PreK teachers carefully curated the activities with assistance from the ECE Specialist who supported the lesson plan development around a single anchor book.

### *Expanding* Literacy Opportunities

TCDE partnered with organizations to secure children's authors, who performed at local schools and free community concerts. The authors included local children's author Linda Boydin, bilingual musician and children's author Jose Luis Orozco, who facilitated free educational workshops for families and educators, and New York Times bestselling children's author and musician Eric Litwin. All families in the community also had the option to connect for free to a parent engagement and learning resource app, Ready Rosie. ReadyRosie is "designed to help teachers strengthen the connections between school and home" by offering over 1,500 educational learning videos accessible to families with a login to the app. Additionally, families engaged in Book Drive-Up events coordinated with multiple organizations to deliver information to families with young children (Fire Department, Tehama County Library, etc.). At the drive-up event, families received a book bag containing an anchor book and materials for activities. A week after receiving the book bags, the families connected to the Corning Early Childhood Facebook page to watch a pre-recorded video of a center-based teacher delivering a lesson plan using the items in the book bag. TCDE distributed over 1,000 per year through these events.

"One of the greatest *Successes* that stemmed from the Corning Promise Early Language and Literacy Development initiative was the new and strengthened partnerships."

Teresa Manning  
Early Childhood Specialist



## EARLY LANGUAGE & LITERACY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM STRATEGIES CONT'D

### *Addressing* **Social- Emotional**

Children in the participating PreK programs experiencing social, emotional, or behavioral difficulties could engage in play therapy with a licensed therapist in Corning. Play Therapy was free to the families enrolled in the center-based programs. This direct service approach addressed the structural barriers often hindering families from receiving help.

## BRIDGING ACCESS TO SERVICES

Corning Promise partnered with Northern California Child Development Inc. and Tehama County Health Services Agency - Health Families to support children's growth through home-based early learning, parent education and support, and health programming services. Each program was structured with the recognition that parents are children's first and most influential teachers.

### *Expanding* **Early Learning**

NCCDI offered early education and family support services to 22 families. Each family received approximately 46 yearly visits. The bilingual home visitor followed an evidence-based home visiting model and employed strategies and activities to build parents' knowledge and skills to support healthy child development. NCCDI conducted screenings and assessments at specific intervals to ensure each child was progressing in all areas and, when applicable, referred them to receive additional intervention. The families received age-appropriate books during their participation. NCCDI also invited home-based families to parent-engagement workshops. During the pandemic, weekly visits were an essential connection for families needing community resources to address their immediate needs.

### *Focusing on* **Relational Health**

The TCHSA Health Families/Healthy Beginnings offered support through a home visitation program to approximately 11 families. The Health Families Tehama model focuses on "early childhood relational health" - grounded in a framework designed to enhance family functioning and reduce risks by strengthening protective factors through cultivating and strengthening the parent-child relationship and promoting healthy growth and development of children. The number of visits varied depending on the needs of each family. Before the pandemic, a dedicated Public Health Nurse supported the families; however, the nurse was transferred to a new unit when the pandemic started.

## DEVELOPMENTAL TRACKING OF ALL CHILDREN UNDER 5

First 5 Tehama, partnering with Help Me Grow (HMG), oversees an initiative that conducts developmental screening of children under five living in the Tehama region. To reach more children, First 5 Tehama hosts screening clinics in various locations, identifying sites and events with the help of community agencies. By proactively seeking children to screen to ensure they are meeting developmental milestones, potential issues can be detected, which allows for early interventions. After the initial connection, HMG workers communicate with families, share community resources as needed, and rescreen children at recommended intervals. The HMG staff are most often from the communities they serve; their community connection helps boost receptivity from community residents because they come from similar life experiences, languages, and ethnicities and understand the socioeconomic situations of the families they serve.

## BUILDING CAPACITY

Corning Promise partnered with First 5 Tehama to administer an evidence-based Positive Parenting Program that strengthens the knowledge and skills of parents to engage in positive parenting and enhance family resiliency. In 2021 and 2022, First 5 Tehama began the foundational work of building competencies of local practitioners to deliver Triple P to families in the Tehama County region. Data collected from parents/guardians post-participation showed an increase in their confidence and comfort in their parental role, an improvement in the quality of parent-child interactions, and an enhancement in the family's mental health. Research on the effectiveness of Triple P has shown that it helps to reduce child maltreatment and behavior problems, and the children tend to do better in school.

First 5 Tehama trained 41 early childhood system leaders/practitioners on implementing trauma-informed strategies in diverse work settings. These system leaders, ranging from health care workers to social workers and educators, learned from trauma experts and each other. Beyond the project implementation, First 5 Tehama continued to convene groups quarterly for professional learning opportunities. Over the years, the leaders have continued to work together, coordinating services to enhance family support.

## HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL BRIDGING

The leaders engaged in horizontal and vertical bridging activities to offer a more comprehensive approach to support the healthy development of early learners:

### *Horizontal* Bridging

During the federal Promise Neighborhood funding window between 2017-2024, over 20 educational leaders from private Pre-K programs, state preschools, and early/head start programs actively participated in structured learning sessions designed for mutual learning and development.

### *Vertical* Alignment

To strengthen the continuity of learning for the young learners, educators from the Corning Pre-K centers and Kindergarten teachers from CUESD came together to focus on vertical alignment activities that ensured children moving from preschool to kindergarten had a smooth transition. Facilitated by expert trainers from Be GLAD ("Guided Language Acquisition Design"), the team discussed developmental learning goals, coordinated curriculum and instructional practices to create vertical cohesiveness, and focused on supporting English Language Learners. The educators met virtually and in person to learn key strategies while incorporating planning time. See [begladtraining.com](http://begladtraining.com) for more information about their teaching theory.

Since 2018, the City of Corning has offered diverse recreation and enrichment opportunities to children of all ages. Some classes offered to early learners include parent-engagement workshops, ballet classes, tiny tots learning, and many other enrichment opportunities. The City of Corning procured 8.5 million to sustain the recreation program beyond the grant life.



## WHAT WE ACHIEVED TOGETHER

### *Storytelling in Numbers*

The accomplishments, represented in numbers, remind us that we can achieve more by working together. These are only a few of the many successes:

800+

Number of Books Distributed each Year at the Book Drive Up Event

7

All Center-Based Pre-K Programs Made Significant Growth on the ELLCO

26+

Number of Pre-K Educators who participated in Trauma-Responsive & Resilience-Building PD

100%

Families in Need of Early Intervention, Enrolled in Home-Based Programs, were Referred for Services

750+

Number of Community Members who attended the Eric Litwin (Author) Community Events

30+

Number of Additional Children Received Early Learning Services Per Year

84%+

Percent of Incoming Kindergarten Children Met Age-Appropriate Developmental Milestones Starting in 2020

25+

Pre-K and Kindergarten Educators Participated in Vertical Articulation PD together in 2020

## *About Corning Promise*

Since 2017, the Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood (“Corning Promise”), a community initiative of the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians Tribe, has served as a backbone entity maintaining strategic coherence and direction, evaluating progress, ensuring compliance with grant regulations, encouraging greater collaboration and using data to inform system improvements. Operating in a decentralized model, relying heavily on the partners to implement the solutions, Corning Promise learned to maintain synergy while respecting the partners’ autonomy and expertise.

# INTEGRATING BEST-PRACTICES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD TO ACHIEVE LONG-TERM SUCCESS

In 2018, the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians -Corning Promise co-developed with the Tehama County Department of Education (TCDE) the Early Language and Literacy Development Initiative. The initiative is an integrated, scientifically based instructional program that focuses on improving language and early reading skills of children in public and private preschools in Corning. The initiative has three major components: 1) ongoing professional development including in-classroom coaching for preschool educators; 2) scientific-based instruction and curricula focused on language and early reading skill development; and 3) programming designed to increase parental involvement.

High-quality teachers are key to successful preschool programs. The initiative is focused on providing direct support to early childhood educators. Regular professional development activities are facilitated by experts in early language and literacy development. Trained coaches work side-by-side with teachers in their classrooms to ensure the implementation of scientifically based instructional approaches and curricula.

Regular parenting programs include parent training and home literacy programming. Training sessions empower parents to engage in their roles as their child's first and most important teacher. Parents are taught strategies on how to promote language and early reading in their homes. Additionally, the initiative supports parent group events. For example, well-known author and entertainer, Eric Litwin, the original author of 'Pete the Cat', and Jose Luis Orozco, bilingual children's author and performer, came to Corning to promote reading. Children, young and old, from far and wide, came to the local renovated Rodgers Theater to laugh, sing, share, and dance in the small rural community.

The initiative regularly collects data to monitor student

learning and to determine the extent to which program goals are achieved. Student data are collected and analyzed and shared with classroom educators. Teresa Manning, the initiative's coordinator, explains the process, *"At the end of each of the three assessment periods, we come together as a team to compile the data, share the results, and look at it from a growth perspective..."*



Another valuable assessment is the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO), an observational measure used to assess classroom environments and instructional programming. The data from the ELLCO are used to drive decisions about which literacy materials to purchase with the goal that each classroom will become a "Center of Excellence". Kayla Diehl, the Preschool Director at Sunshine Preschools, describes how the funds were used at her preschool, *"... we were able to use the funds to set up a writing center. The children use the tools at the writing center to help build literacy skills"*.

Implementation of this initiative is only eight months old, but data show significant increases in English oral language and early reading skill development.

Student growth can be attributed to the simultaneous implementation of all three of the initiative's components. The accomplishments of teachers and students do not go unacknowledged, Manning adds, *"We celebrate growth and share improvement strategies."*

*"At the heart of the initiative are the children; they are the reason the Tribe is investing in proven strategies that help set children up for a lifetime of success,"* commented Dawna Holiday-Shchedrov, Director of Corning Promise. Manning sums up the initiative's primary goal, *"We want to ensure that we are building something for the long haul. Our promise to Corning is to sustain high-quality educational programs for all young children in our community – today, tomorrow, and always."*

# ELEMENTARY–MIDDLE SCHOOL

## *Building Strong Academic Foundations*

*The investment in the elementary and middle school years is crucial because this is a pivotal period when children develop core skills that are essential for success in high school, college and future career.*

*Corning Promise partnered with Corning Union Elementary School District and Tehama County Office of Education to identify solutions that address the specific needs of the student population. The focus of the investments is to improve student achievement, build strong foundational skills, strengthen vertical alignment, enhance student well-being, improve teacher and learning quality, and create safe and more supportive learning environments. Corning Promise invested in:*

### ***Key Programs (2023 - 2025):***

- Research-Based Instructional (RBI) reading intervention
- Teacher development in evidence-based reading instruction
- Attendance initiative
- School-based therapy services
- Instructional supports for reading initiative

### ***Key Programs Prior to 2022:***

- School improvement initiatives, focusing on literacy, language and writing development, and mathematics
- Evidence-based substance abuse and violence prevention program
- Administrator and teacher development programs
- Attendance initiative
- Instructional strategies to bridge the ECE and Tk-K system
- Instructional supports
- Extended learning program (afterschool and summer)
- School-based therapy services

## SUMMER SCHOOL ON WHEELS

Safe Education & Recreation for Rural Families (SERRF) continues to offer quality summer programming even with new conditions limiting in-person engagements. The absence of in-person structured schooling has allowed for the development of flexible, innovative approaches. These approaches allow families to individualize the learning experiences of their children. SERRF curricula and instructional materials are aligned to the State Common Core standards. Programming is

designed to address the whole child, with opportunities to develop knowledge in core content areas through fun, engaging activities. These include opportunities to engage in recreational activities that promote healthy habits. Special support is also provided to non-English speaking students, including the development of materials in the Spanish language and check-ins by bilingual staff throughout the summer session.

# CELEBRATING PERFECT ATTENDANCE

## *Corning Students Shine with Recreation Certificates*

The City of Corning, in partnership with the Corning Union Elementary School District (CUESD), recently recognized the dedication and perseverance of local students who achieved perfect attendance. As a token of appreciation, two students from each school were selected to receive recreation certificate awards, giving them the opportunity to join any recreation class of their choice for free.

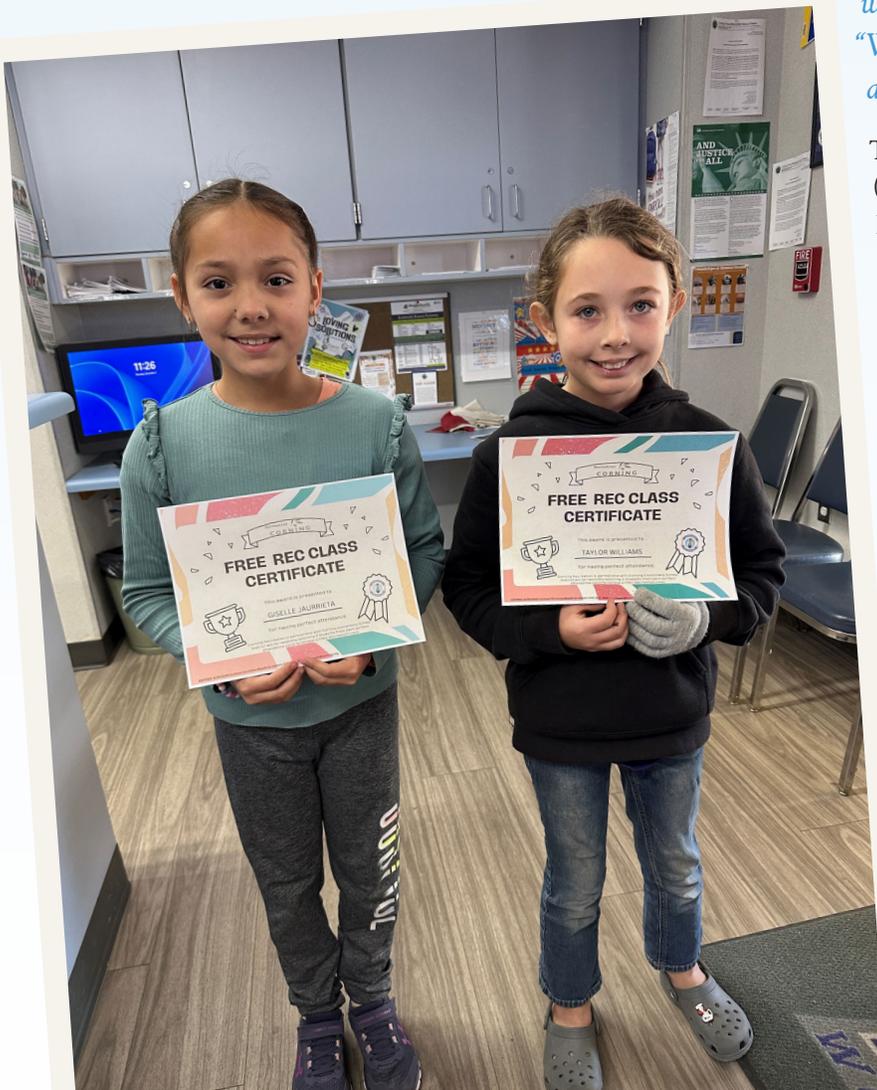
With so many students meeting the perfect attendance milestone, the recipients had to be selected randomly—an inspiring testament to the commitment of Corning’s young learners. Christina Meeds, City of Corning

Recreation Coordinator/Planner II, shared pictures of the proud students holding their certificates, their smiles reflecting their excitement and accomplishment.

This collaboration between the City of Corning and CUESD exemplifies the community’s dedication to encouraging positive habits like attendance while providing opportunities for personal growth and enrichment through recreation.

*“These certificates are more than just awards—they’re invitations for our students to explore their interests, develop new skills, and connect with peers within the community,” said Christina. “We’re proud to celebrate their hard work in a way that supports their continued growth.”*

The Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood (“Corning Promise”), the community arm of the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indian Tribe, works in collaboration with community partners to implement cradle-to-career solutions, and this is just one example of how the Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood initiative is investing in programs that support student success while fostering wellness and community connection.



# EXPANDED LEARNING IN RANCHO

There's a subtle difference in how the SERRF (Safe Education & Recreation for Rural Families) Program is being referred to these days. Once commonly known as the after-school program for Tehama County, administrators and staff are now referring to their award-winning array of services and interventions as the SERRF Expanded Learning Program.

*"We're more than after-school now,"* says Karla Stroman, SERRF Administrator at the Tehama County Department of Education.

In one rural community, expansion beyond after-school programming was made possible through partnerships between Corning Promise, Tehama County Department of Education, and multiple service providers. During the school year, turnout in the after-school program at Rancho Tehama typically reaches 100 students. According to Stroman, **with no on-site program available, there is little interest in participation in summer programs.** Even with the invitation to participate in off-site summer programs at the nearest school, a 48 mile round-trip bus ride, few if any participate. In 2018, when the program was offered directly at the Rancho Tehama community school, **participation soared to 40 local youth.** *"It made a huge difference to have it on site,"* she adds. *"Corning Promise really allowed us to make that happen."*

In the spirit of Corning Promise, where partnerships are central to the project's operation, summer enrichment activities were made available in Rancho Tehama to children in grades K-8. Similar high-quality, fun and engaging programs were also offered in other district schools.

An alliance with California State University – Chico and sub-contract with CalPoly, funded by Anthem, allowed for Rancho Tehama students to participate in culinary workshops and gardening. These partnerships, including the alliance with Community Action Agency at Tehama County Department of Social Services, will allow several mentors from the high school, who live in the Rancho Tehama area, to assist with the on-site gardening program throughout the school year. This will allow the high school students to gain work experience and test the waters for a career.

Other programs that shed light on SERRF's extension throughout the Corning area include the Missoula Children's Theatre at Maywood School. A well-established touring company that makes an annual stop in Red Bluff through the Tehama County Arts Council, Missoula Children's Theatre casts and produces a one-hour production in one week, providing costumes, props and direction to the chosen youth who audition for their parts. While the Red Bluff production is open to Corning youth, logistics of travel to the mandatory after-school rehearsals often inhibited participation. This year, 35 area youth were cast in a production of *The Secret Garden*.

The summer programs mix academics and enrichment activities designed to promote academic gains during the summer; they are offered by highly trained, certificated teachers who deliver in-person academic support, while using technology to enhance the student's literacy skills. Corning students also participated in the county-wide book in common program with the Newbery Medal-winning, *The One and Only Ivan* by Katherine Applegate.



Of course, summer is synonymous with fun, and what could be more fun for students than field trips? This year, SERRF summer participants at Rancho Tehama and Maywood were able to attend the Ide Adobe State Park for living history experiences and spent a day at the Tehama District Fair where students learned about the different Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM)

career, engaged with a Maker Space and enjoyed all the traditional fair activities, such as barn tours, shows and carnival rides. *"A lot of kids don't get to go to the fair,"* says Stroman, who delights in bringing this traditional community activity to a wider audience of students.

Stroman reflects with pride on the greatly expanded offerings created and says the program will continue *"giving kids hands on experiences and skills that they can continue to develop and bring home to their families."*

These lofty undertakings are not done in isolation, but in community, and the results are meaningful. *"It was really a leveraging of resources,"* says Stroman. *"These are opportunities for enrichment that we may never have had without the contribution from Corning Promise."*

# ATTENDANCE IS KEY

Research has shown that one of the significant drivers of student achievement is attendance. Schools are generally held accountable for their overall attendance rates and “average daily attendance” (ADA). On the surface, schools with an attendance rate higher than 90% are deemed a success. However, hidden behind these rates, is the ugly reality of chronic absenteeism. As Hedy Chang, Executive Director of Attendance Works puts it, “Daily attendance averages tell you how many students show up every day, but not how many are missing so much school that they are headed off track academically.” (NPR, December 7, 2015).

The consequences of accumulated absenteeism have an impact on student learning and missed instructional time means falling behind. For the early learners this means missing the opportunity to learn foundational skills that will help them to succeed in later grades. Putting it in perspective, one missed day of school means 6 hours of missed instructional time. **Missing 2-3 days of school a month adds up to 12-18 hours of missed instructional time.**

Recognizing the accumulation of missed school days translates into missing valuable instructional time and decreasing the momentum started early in the school year, the Corning Union Elementary School District (CUESD) Superintendent, Rick Fitzpatrick, and a team of leaders began analyzing data to structure a plan and bring attention to the issue. Knowing accumulated absences impact student learning, Superintendent Fitzpatrick looked at both attendance rates and chronic absenteeism rates, “We have about 96% attendance,” he adds, though he notes that, “Our numbers of chronically absent students are much higher than we want.” From this data, they implemented an initiative to improve attendance and ensure all students are ready to succeed in CUESD schools. As Mr. Fitzpatrick puts it, “One of our goals this year is to improve attendance across the board and, specifically, to reduce chronic absenteeism.”

Adopting this perspective, Rick and his team designed a plan to increase communication with families whose children were chronically absent in the previous academic year. His school team is monitoring these students’ daily attendance and supporting their families. **Early intervention is key.**

Studies have shown that when families feel welcome and supported, and the school culture promotes academic success, students have greater reason to show up to school on a consistent basis. Fitzpatrick believes strongly in this

model and adds, “The underlying reasons for the absences are many and varied but we’re more concerned with finding a prescription for success.”

Not only is forging positive relationships with students and families key to increase attendance rates and decreasing chronic absenteeism rates, another key component involves **strengthening a student’s positive sense of connectedness to the school community** by creating a welcoming school environment. “It’s about creating community,” says Fitzpatrick, “and being intentional with things other than academics to create it.” Teachers and staff are important assets to the success of students, Fitzpatrick understanding the importance comments, “We can only do this if we all care about the same things,” he adds.

Unlike many districts that only take a punitive approach to chronic absenteeism, CUESD schools are committed to positive, pro-active support for students and their entire families. Fitzpatrick says, “A loving and challenging school life can be transformative. We can change how we present, how we welcome, and how we reinforce.” In short, the district is making every effort to create an inviting climate that supports families and parents know that they will find support rather than judgment in difficult situations.

Fitzpatrick, in conversation with the school district staff, encourages them to speak in a supportive tone: “We want to help you. We want to come along side and help make it better.” When students make strides in their attendance, it does not go unrecognized, he adds, “We make sure we notice them and celebrate them.” Attendance awards have been modified to celebrate improvements, as well as to honor the students who attend consistently.

Olive View School Principal Joe Lodigiani is in awe of the turnaround he’s seen in some of his students, including two young students who achieved perfect attendance in the first 25 days of this school year after a prior year of up to 23 unexcused absences. “We have to think, with that dramatic turnaround, that we’re having an impact,” he says. For all students, he adds, “As they’re missing their first day of school we’re making a call that day. It’s a call of concern. It reinforces the importance of school attendance.”

When students are in class, teachers and administrators can focus on what Fitzpatrick considers the larger issue of education: “How to empower the imagination and the passion of students. That’s the challenge. Always will be.”

# HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE & CAREER

## *Preparing Students for Future Success*

*High school is a critical time for academic, social, and emotional development, serving as a bridge between the foundation laid in elementary and middle school and the transition to postsecondary education and/or workforce.*

*Corning Promise partnered with the Corning Union High School District to implement solutions that focused on increasing academic rigor, optimizing programs and supportive services, promoting positive mental health, creating conditions where all students can thrive, expanding career exploration opportunities, improving graduation rates, and strengthening vertical articulation with the K-8 system and the college and workforce pathway. Corning Promise invested in the following solutions:*

### **Key Programs (2023 - 2025):**

- Career Pathway Focus and ReDesign
- Wellness - Community Agency Integration
- College and Career Focus
- School-based therapy services
- Parenting Education for Parents of Teens

### **Key Programs Prior to 2022:**

- English Language Development Program Support
- Mathematics Development/Alignment
- Dual Enrollment Program
- Academic Facilitator
- High School Counselor
- College and Career Readiness
- School-based therapy services

## CORNING MAYOR CONGRATULATES RESTORE PROGRAM GRADUATE

A young Restore program graduate was recognized Tuesday at the City Council meeting by Mayor Douglas Hatley Jr., who presented a graduation certificate of completion.

Hatley congratulated Bridget Ramirez, 10, who said she enjoyed spending time with her mentor, Carly, and checking out the animals at Hope Haven Farm in Corning. She said she enjoyed riding horses and seeing goats while at the farm.

Some other activities the two have done include going to the Corning Animal Shelter, walking some of the dogs and even naming a few dogs at the shelter.

The Restore program works with juvenile diversion, where troubled children have a choice to either do an 18-week mentor program or go through the jail system and serve probation, said Ric Schoon, the program coordinator. It also is for youths in need of mentors.

The juveniles in the program are “one healthy adult away from being a success story,” Schoon said during a previous meeting. It makes such an impact to give a child an adult mentor who is there for them whenever they are needed.

Schoon introduced two mentors who spend many hours a week with the children and are studying criminal justice at California State University, Chico.

The two said it has been a great experience working with and being able to help the youth.

The program was recently at risk because funding was drying up. The Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians stepped in to provide grant funding to continue the program. The tribe received grant funding to implement the Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood Initiative in December of 2016 and will apply \$200,000 toward the program. The tribe was awarded the grant of more than \$14.6 million to be dispersed over the span of five years from the US Department of Education to serve the Corning Elementary and High School districts and youth programs. The grant funds allow the continuation of the Restore program through June 30, 2018.

# ADVANCING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

*for Students in Corning Union High School District*

The Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians, through its Promise Neighborhood initiative, has invested funds into an innovative position at Corning Union High School District (CUHSD), a Career Pathway Coordinator. The investment aims to optimize and expand the district's Career Technical Education (CTE) programs, ensuring the district has quality programming that blends technical, academic, and employability skills, and leads to meaningful career opportunities.

The Career Pathway Coordinator has been working alongside education colleagues within the district to refine, optimize, and expand degree pathways and strengthen partnerships with local industries and colleges. In a short period, the initiative has made significant strides; these are a few of the highlights:

## Dual Enrollment CTE Expansion

Over the years, the CUHSD Dual Enrollment Program has expanded to include a variety of CTE courses, including Agricultural Mechanics, Welding, Natural Resources, Patient Care, Introduction to Medical Careers, and Advanced Manufacturing. **Students can simultaneously earn high school and college credit for completing specific CTE courses, getting them one step closer to their career goals.** Reflecting on the benefits, Emily Brown, Career Pathway Coordinator, comments, *“Dual enrollment gives students an incredible opportunity to gain real-world experience while pursuing their education, setting them up for success both in the classroom and beyond.”* To obtain approval to classify CTE courses as dual enrollment courses, CUHSD worked with Shasta College to ensure the course meets the rigor and curriculum standard of the equivalent-level class and other requirements.



## Local Partnerships Expanded

**In Spring 2025, regional businesses opened doors to 90 high school seniors for an eventful Job Shadow Day.** In total, 42 organizations - auto dealerships, automotive repair shops, veterinarians, health clinics, welding shops, and many other businesses - accepted students to shadow their professionals for the day. The job shadow day provided students the opportunity to learn firsthand the experience of different professionals, an experience that will help them make more informed career choices. Bridging school and community has been a great opportunity for the students to build connections with local professionals in their field of interest. One participating business shared, *“The students who visited our office for Job Shadow Day stood out—they were early, well-dressed, eager to learn, and showed impressive professionalism. They truly set the bar high, and we hope to one day call them colleagues in the field of dentistry.”*

## Industry Collaboration

A CTE Advisory Committee, made up of 24 industry professionals, is **helping make the high school district's CTE program more relevant and impactful through their valuable input on curriculum, certifications, training tools, and industry standards.** These professionals are helping ensure the CUHSD's CTE offers courses that align with industry expectations and drive growth and forward motion for our programs.

**"The state added value by investing Promise Neighborhood funds in Corning's place-based efforts, and CUHSD amplified that investment with strategic initiatives aimed at driving long-term change."**

**DAWNA SHCHEDROV**

## Long-Term Success

Over the last two years, CUHSD procured several grants managed by the California Department of Education to strengthen and expand the district's CTE program. **The diverse funding sources total \$3.7 million.** Of that total, \$1.2 million was procured in 2024 from the Golden State Pathway Implementation Grant to promote CUHSD pathways in Manufacturing, Entrepreneurship, and Culinary, and \$1.8 million came from the K12 Strong Workforce Program to promote pathways in high-wage, high-skill, high-growth areas, which includes Education, Patient Care, Firefighting, and Animal Science. A smaller CTE Incentive grant positively benefits all CTE pathways, with investments in facilities, equipment, certifications, and industry alignment. The grant funds from CDE will exponentially impact students and industries and boost regional and state economies.

**In short, this is not just about opportunities - for many, this is a game-changer, one that will have life-long impacts.**

*"It is no understatement to say that the Promise Neighborhood investment has benefited the community and the children, and the investments have been multiplied,"* commented Dawna Shchedrov, Corning Promise Director.



# BUILDING MENTAL HEALTH & RESILIENCE

## *A Path to Student Success in Corning*

Recognizing that positive mental health is strongly linked to improved academic, personal, and professional outcomes, the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indian Tribe - Corning Promise (Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood) initiative invested in building mental fortitude and cultivating resilience in the kindergarten to high school seniors in Corning's schools and educators within the local schools.

The goal of promoting optimal development of children and adolescents included building educators' knowledge on the adverse impact of trauma on children and adolescents. In 2019, a partnership with Tehama County Department of Education, who extended their reach through the Early Language and Literacy Program to area preK programs, and the local elementary district, **was able to offer professional development opportunities to 30+ early childhood and K-8 educators.** The educators learned about the power of trauma-informed practices from Julie Kurtz, the founder of the Center for Optimal Brain Integration® (COBI) and author of multiple books focused on trauma, resilience, and social-emotional resilience. The educators learned many new practical strategies on trauma's effect

on learning, building safe and supportive environments, promoting stronger relationships and shifting the educators' mindset from asking, "What is wrong with you?" to asking, "What happened to you?"



Teresa Manning, the Promise Neighborhood Early Childhood Specialist who coordinated learning opportunities for PreK educators, shares the impact of the professional development: *"Julie's work has been transformational. It helped our educators not just recognize the impact of trauma but also take actionable steps to support children in a way that builds emotional resilience and enhances learning."*

Seeking to build on the 2019 introduction to trauma and social-emotional resilience offered to preK and K-8 educators, Julie Kurtz was invited to continue this learning in a five-part series that explored the science of the brain and the power of neuroplasticity. Early childhood educators who participated in the Early Literacy and Language program, were invited to **learn key strategies to maximize preschool-aged children's potential.** By focusing on adult self-awareness and teaching practices, coupled with the



neurology of the brain and promoting sensory and emotional literacy, the **educators learned strategies to engage with children and create predictable environments.** Subsequent to this professional development, 30 educators received coaching from Julie Kurtz on building nurturing and responsive relationships, creating safe and predictable learning spaces where preschool-age children can grow socially, emotionally, and mentally. As a capstone, Julie Kurtz observed educators' teaching practices and created coaching action plans that included sensory literacy to complement and strengthen emotional literacy. The Early Childhood Specialist supported implementation of the coaching action plans.

Another powerful lever for creating meaningful change in the Pre-K ecosystem was offered through direct counseling of students enrolled in the seven preschool programs that participated in the Early Literacy and Language Program. Corning Promise partnered with River Cities Counseling, a behavioral health organization, to address the mental health needs of young children directly through play therapy. The therapist utilized tailored play and creative approaches to help young children express their emotions and thoughts, and through therapy, addressed social, emotional, and behavioral issues, ensuring that these young children had the support they needed to thrive. The therapy services were optional and offered at no-cost.

*"The investment in wellness and addressing mental health is part of a holistic approach that focuses on the whole child. We want to create the conditions for children to be successful and give every opportunity for them to thrive,"* said Dawna Shchedrov, Project Director at Corning Promise. *"Through partnerships with organizations like River Cities Counseling, we've been able to provide essential mental health services and create an ecosystem of support that complement the educational efforts."*

Beyond the investment in young childrens' well-being, the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indian Tribe has supported K-12 students' mental well-being by partnering with the two

Corning school districts to offer school-based therapy services at no cost. Gary Fortenberry, Marriage and Family Therapist, comments: *"There is no way to measure the impact of this investment, it's transformed many lives and has contributed to building a healthier, more resilient community"*. In addition to offering therapy services within the schools, the therapists also take part in the school's crisis response team, helping to address situations involving students experiencing crises.

**"There is no way to measure the impact of this investment, it's transformed many lives and has contributed to building a healthier, more resilient community"**

**GARY FORTENBERRY**

With the groundbreaking investments from the state of CA to four Promise Neighborhood communities, including the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indian Tribe, this has allowed Corning Promise to co-design an approach with Corning Union High School District, to engage community-based and regional organizations as powerful partners in the endeavor to change outcomes through community agency integration, coordinated by the new team member, the Wellness Coordinator. The Wellness Coordinator role is to weave together a solid system of support for students, develop youth-led programs that promote healthy lifestyles, and engage in activities to address chronic absenteeism and engage families through outreach activities.

Through strategic partnerships, data-driven actions, and a focus on well-being and resilience, Corning Promise, in partnership with the community partners, are helping create a community where every child, family, and educator can thrive. Leilani Miller, the CUHSD's Wellness Coordinator, an on-the-ground coordinator shared the importance of sustaining programs, *"There is a need. Children and youth are facing a lot, from academic pressures to social challenges and family dynamics, and many other stressors. They need solid resources in schools to help them cope and thrive. It is for this reason that sustainability is important to us."*

# DUAL ENROLLMENT

## HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS RECEIVE COLLEGE CREDIT

For a group of Corning High School students, a rigorous look at the past is helping them prepare for the future. A college course available online through Shasta College and facilitated by Corning High School teacher, Jason Weston, on the high school campus, allows students to gain dual-credit for both college and high school.

*"I wanted the experience to see what just one college class would be like,"* says incoming senior, Abigail, who recently completed the History 17 A & B offerings as a junior. While her professor is in New York City, she receives support from her co-hort of students and teacher, Mr. Weston, during a special course period designed to facilitate the dual credit courses. This class period, and Mr. Weston's time, is funded by Corning Promise.

Research conducted by the Community College Research Center found that dual credit enrollment participation is positively related to a range of college outcomes, including **college enrollment and persistence, greater credit accumulation, and higher college GPA**. This is in part because students are introduced earlier to the rigor of college work and therefore better prepared when they arrive at a college campus. Additionally, when they arrive with college credits already attained, it **reduces the time and cost necessary on the campus** and makes achievement of a college diploma feel that much more attainable.

Both Abigail and her friend Veronica already have their sites set on college and appreciate the head start their dual enrollment class has given them. *"At first it was really hard,"* says Veronica. *"We had to read a lot of books and the class was very challenging. But once I got into a routine and got organized, it started to get a little easier."*

Corning Superintendent Jared Caylor concurs about the rigor of the course. *"As a history major myself, I was not only impressed with how rigorous the class was, but how*

*well the students did. I read a particular essay question from the test and admitted to my colleagues that had I been asked the question, I'm not sure I would have done as well as these junior students."*

"It allowed me to get a glimpse of what college will be like and I'm excited for it."

ABIGAIL

The key to the successful dual credit program is the consistent presence and time committed to facilitation by Mr. Weston. Students gather one period a day to work on the course with his guidance. While he does not teach the course, he supports the students in being organized, remembering course time lines and understanding what is required of them academically.

*"It was great being in class with other students who took their work seriously,"* says Veronica of her classmates. *"We shared tips and knowledge with each other. It was like being on a team. It was different from high school classes because everyone takes the class seriously."* Adds

Abigail, *"I would tell others that you have to push yourself but that it does get easier."*

*"I had to really learn how to read the textbooks,"* adds Veronica. *"And learn new skills like highlighting names so that I could find and reference them during test taking time."*

In addition to the history courses, Corning High offers dual enrollment in College Career Readiness, Health, and Communication & Technology. A Political Science course is being considered to complement the history offerings. **More than 200 students completed the College Career Readiness course**, giving them insight into the expectations of college life while earning their first college credits.

The success of the history course is best summed up by Abigail, who says, *"I felt like I got the opportunity to experience college, but with the safety of being in high school. It allowed me to get a glimpse of what college will be like and I'm excited for it."*

# GROW MORE OPPORTUNITIES

The Superintendent of the Corning Union High School District has a commitment, “to grow more opportunities,” this has translated to an innovative Student Support Program made possible through the partnership between the District, Corning Promise (the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians), Butte College and Shasta College. The aim of the Student Support program is to decrease summer melt for college-intending students, increase retention rates of college-going students and lower students’ barriers to success by introducing a Corning-based academic support program that takes neighboring college advisors/counselors from their traditional college setting to the rural community of Corning. This feeder relationship has far-reaching results.

The innovative project rolled out at the end of the school year, in time for the college advisors to share with high school students the new opportunity to receive a wide range of personal, career, and academic support during the months of June, July, and August, ALL, without leaving Corning. With gas prices spiking, this program helps families reduce travel costs by engaging in one-to-one-sessions with a college advisor in their hometown, allowing them to redirect saved funds to college tuition and other associated college fees. This is a valuable resource for low-income families who already face financial challenges. Further, with research showing a relationship between early connectedness and a student’s retention in college, this approach is increasing the chance students will be successful with connections to the college community established before the school year starts, and a supportive counselor navigating the murky waters with college-intending students from initial interest.

The partnering colleges, Butte College and Shasta College, have demonstrated their investment in the success of the project by offering their most qualified bilingual (English and Spanish speaking) counselors/advisors. The college counselors/advisors were selected based on their ability to meet the linguistically diverse needs of the Corning student population.

The Corning Promise Project Director, Dawna Holiday-Shchedrov, a first-generation college graduate, is a product of other’s willingness to “*grow opportunities*” and work collaboratively to help others succeed, she believes, “*without incredible people who work towards a shared vision, I wouldn’t be where I am today.*” The Summer Student Support program is a prime example of how organizations can work together to produce change in the lives of people.



# GETTING A JUMP-START ON COLLEGE WHILE IN HIGH SCHOOL

Corning Union High School District (CUHSD), in partnership with Shasta College and Corning Promise, is closing the achievement gap by offering a jump-start to an advanced education by giving students the opportunity to complete postsecondary coursework while in high school. Dual enrollment gives students the opportunity to earn college credit, while at the same time apply credits earned to meet high school graduation requirements, and exposes students to the academic rigor of college-level coursework.

To promote better academic outcomes, CUHSD employs a highly qualified, certificated high school teachers to monitor students enrolled in the college-level classes. Jared Caylor, Superintendent of CUHSD describes the supportive design of the program as *“basically it’s a built-in study group for our students.”* Creating conditions for success has allowed 400+ students to successfully pass a college course in the last two years since implementation.

Introduction of college-level coursework starts early with the entire freshmen class enrolling in a high school class that embeds college readiness in the curriculum, allowing students to receive one college credit by the end of their freshman year. Juniors and seniors can also elect to take a dual enrollment class, based on their qualification. Offered on campus, at

Corning High School, these courses allow the student to get use to the academic expectation of college before leaving their supportive environment.

There are numerous benefits to dual enrollment. A number of studies have found that students who participated in dual enrollment were more likely, compared to similar peers without dual enrollment introduction, to **graduate from high school, enroll in four-year colleges and persist in postsecondary education.** And, for CUHSD students, their taste of **college comes without a fee**, with all costs covered by the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians, through Corning Promise. Whether coming from backgrounds of advantage or disadvantage these courses give all students a new sense of confidence, Caylor comments, *“By taking these courses, they prove to themselves that they can do the work.”*

Caylor promises, *“even after initial grant funding is gone, we will see the legacy of the Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood grant continue.”* His goal is to work closely with the neighboring community colleges to offer pathways that lead to completion of technical and trade programs.



# PROJECT RESTORE

## *Through a Mentor's Eyes*

Tehama County offers an alternative to the formal criminal justice system by redirecting young adults who have committed non-violent offenses to participate in a promising intervention program. The program, Project RESTORE, is a strength-based 18-week mentorship program aimed at **eliminating future delinquency by strengthening self-efficacy and social bonds**. The program uses community services, counseling and probation, and teams up with professionals, community members, and college students to serve as mentors to encourage, guide and reinforce positive changes in the lives of Corning's youth.

Angela Serrano first learned about this program in her criminal justice course at Chico State University where a recruiter shared information about Project RESTORE. Growing up in an area of high crime and gang activity in Los Angeles County, Angela was drawn to the program because it would allow her to continue her enjoyment of inspiring and empowering "the kid in the corner." She was immediately determined to participate as a volunteer.

Following a screening process, Angela was accepted as a Project RESTORE mentor. After training and orientation, she was matched with a mentee with documented anger issues who was not attending school regularly. The teen had previously struggled and eventually disconnected from her prior mentor; Angela shared her own concern about building a meaningful, authentic relationship.

This fear was quickly expunged during their first meeting. *"We talked for hours at the park,"* she recalled. *"We talked about everything."*

Through the course of weekly visits and open communication their bond was strengthened. The pair worked together to meet program expectations by setting a specific and attainable goal. The time-bound goal proved to be what the mentee needed to gain confidence. Shortly after achieving her first goal, school became a priority for the mentee and her behavior drastically improved. During their 18-week partnership, the mentee completed other tasks including finding a job and acquiring a car.

*"I knew she had a passion – she just had to find it. I am so proud of her,"* said Angela.

Although the program has ended for the pair, Angela is choosing to continue her relationship with her mentee. She recognizes that long-term support is important for youth who have struggled in the past.

In retrospect, both mentee and mentor have grown and changed. For Angela, the program has solidified her own plans in life – to pursue a career in a helping profession and return to her community to build centers of change. She has already made a tangible and indelible difference in the life of one young adult in the Corning community with her investment of time.

Research supports the effectiveness of adolescent diversion models, with mentored youth less likely to initiate drug and alcohol use, less assaultive and missing few days of school. Since the implementation of Project RESTORE, there has been a reduction in recidivism rates of participants and declines in misconduct and crime by mentored youth.

Join the team who is making a difference in the lives of youth in the Corning community by reaching out to Gary Fortenberry at [info@restoreprogram.org](mailto:info@restoreprogram.org)



# CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAMS

## *A Holistic Approach to Success*

*Corning Promise recognizes that transformational change requires collaboration among community organizations, schools, families, and individuals. By fostering collaboration and focusing on supportive services, well-being initiatives, and leadership development, Corning Promise is creating the conditions and promoting development to improve outcomes. Corning Promise invested in the following solutions:*

### **Key Programs (2023 - 2025):**

- Leadership convening for executive leaders
- City of Corning Recreation Programs
- School-based therapy services

### **Key Programs Prior to 2022:**

- Leadership convening for executive leaders
- City of Corning Recreation Programs
- Project RESTORE (Adolescent Diversion Program) (until 2020)

## LEADERSHIP SERIES TO ADVANCE TEHAMA

In 2019, more than 25 regional leaders convened in Corning to engage in dialogue centered on advancing the goal of helping all children in Corning successfully graduate high school and be college and/or career ready. The goal of the Leadership Series to Advance Tehama was to **synergize efforts cross-organizationally, build individual leadership capacity, and learn a common framework to focus on results to make a positive change** for the Corning-Rancho community. The leadership series was initiated in September 2019 with a “Performance Partnership Summit,” followed by a December meeting that focused on Accountability, Capacity Building, and Strategy Development.

The overarching goal of the Performance Partnership Summit held in September 2019, was to fuel system-wide change by identifying shared targets related to the collaborative result, aligning actions designed to meet the targets, and creating strategy groups with action plans to execute and sustain the work.

The second session in December provided an opportunity for the leaders to review their strategy group’s work-to-date, refine strategies where needed, hold accountability conversations, and engage in other leadership competency development activities/conversations designed to support the collaborative actions leading to the shared result.

# EXPECT MORE TEHAMA

## *Educational Summit*

Educators and various community representatives gathered Wednesday at Rolling Hills Casino for the ninth annual Expect More Tehama Educational Summit with a theme of Create and Cultivate aimed at helping grow local talent to fill work force needs and to raise expectations for Tehama County students beyond that of a high school diploma.

**“If businesses and communities are to thrive and grow, we need more of our students to fill key positions. A talent and worker shortage and low unemployment is forcing the region to be more strategic and creative in how we grow our own today and into the future,”** read the welcome message.

The event, which typically draws from neighboring counties and beyond, had about 200 people in attendance, said Leadership Team member Kathy Garcia. When a presenter asked who at the summit was not from Tehama County somewhere between half and two-thirds of the audience raised their hands. Many of the attendees come from California State University, Chico and Shasta County.

*“It’s all about the power of convening,”* Garcia said. *“People get to meet people they normally wouldn’t and foster connections while leveraging resources to make a difference in our community.”*

The idea of the summit is to **connect people in new ways** and **shed light on issues affecting the youth**, but also to **celebrate the good work being done** in so many areas, she said.

Dr. Robert Eyler spoke toward the beginning of the

event about the local economy and the vision cast for it, including challenges and opportunities. Rachel Hatch spoke about community vitality and social infrastructure, including the need for creative peacemaking, active lifestyles and civic engagement such as a neighborhood watch. The goal is to anticipate what will be needed and how it affects community vitality.

Following Hatch’s presentation, she lead a panel that included Dr. Ronald Clark, a dentist in Red Bluff for 43 years, Ed Stroman and Dale Mendenhall of the Physical Therapy and Wellness Center and Lonnie Scott from Red Bluff High School.

One of the first questions asked was what main skill sets are needed today. Clark said it’s **reading, writing and comprehension** as well as a **willingness to learn**. All four panelists said there is a need for **soft skills or social skills**. Over the years of working together, the men have seen a number of successes in growing their own talent.

Stroman said of 35 he has kept in contact with who have come through his doors through the partnership with the high school, six have **become physical or occupational therapists and four have become clinicians**. Six have gone on **to be firefighters or first responders** and five have **become nurses**.

The partnership trains local youth so they can stay and work in their own community. Stroman said as he gets closer to the age for retirement he knows he has people in place who will take care of his business.

**“People get to meet people they normally wouldn’t and foster connections while leveraging resources to make a difference in our community.”**

KATHY GARCIA

Clark has had 14 who have graduated as dental hygienists and has one more who will graduate this year as a dental assistant, he said. **It is important for businesses to invest in their community and in training their own to keep from having shortages in the workforce.**

There was a shortage in dental hygienists a number of years ago, which is when the Northern California Dental Society made up of nine of the most northern counties in California stepped in. **The group helped raise \$600,000 to start a program at Shasta College that has expanded to be one of the top 5 percent of programs in the nation.**

Having the partnership with the high school allows students to see early on whether or not they want to go into the dental field without having to waste time and money on higher education first.

Mendenhall said, as a former student in the program, it opened doors and broadened his sense of community.

Asked about advice for businesses, Scott said he recommends they reach out to their schools and see what programs are available.

Leadership Team member Kate Grissom talked with Dru Alejandro, tribal leader for the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians, and Tony Cardenas, Corning Promise Neighborhood Team leader, about the grant that is making a difference to the Corning community.

Through the grant funds acquired by the tribe, all youth in Corning area schools have access to great schools to build a stronger community and families, Alejandro said.

Grant funds are focused toward addressing substance abuse and drop out rates.

Work has been done to strengthen teachers through professional development, the addition of reading coaches, five reading assistants, the bridge to college careers and life skills programs for middle school kids and extended learning programs for after school and

summer school programs.

*"It's about creating opportunities and making sure there is a strong support system helping them gain opportunities and eliminating the stumbling blocks,"* Cardenas said.

Kim Clawson spoke about this year's book in common, "Temple Grandin: How the Girl Who Loved Cows Embraced Autism," and the pending visit of author Grandin to the State Theater on Feb. 23. In addition to handing out more than 500 copies of the book to students, parents and community members, the high school has been incorporating the book into agriculture classes.

There was a presentation by a representative from 4-H on the program and all that it offers, Garcia said.

Red Bluff resident Kelsey King was a first time attendee at Wednesday's event and said she loved that it brings so many parts of the community together. It challenged her to think about whether there are ways, as a small business owner, she can provide opportunities to help grow local community leaders.

*"Every piece of my life from the boards I'm involved in to my company and community-based giving are in this room,"* King said. *"It's good because it helps you realize how much community collaboration goes on."*

Cindy Wolff, executive director for the Center for Health Communities connected to Chico State, was a first-timer and said she liked how the event was a regional approach to meeting the goals and desired outcomes for Tehama County. Her favorite part was the discussion by Hatch on public imagination.

To learn more about the summit or Expect More movement, visit [www.expectmoretehama.com](http://www.expectmoretehama.com).



# YOUTH ENRICHMENT

## Program made possible through a partnership between the city and the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians

Anyone wanting a say in what programs Corning's recreation department will be offering this summer and over the next year can do so by taking the city's online recreation survey available through the city's website – [www.corning.org](http://www.corning.org).

During Tuesday's City Council meeting, City Manager Kristina Miller said the city has already received more than 600 responses and she is hoping to receive even more.

*"This is very exciting for our community,"* she added.

The city is now looking for volunteers who will serve as instructors for recreation programs such as art, baking, Pinterest projects, basketball, robotics, skateboard and scooters, and more.

Miller said one of the most popular requests from the surveys she has received is for a one-day Nature Camp.

*"I have found the responses to be very interesting,"* she added. *"I think we can look forward to a very successful and diverse recreation program this summer."*

The Recreational and Youth Enrichment Program is being made possible through a partnership between the city and the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians.

In March the City Council voted unanimously to go into an agreement with the band to fund the youth recreation and enrichment program within the city.

The band approached the city about funding the program through the federal Promise Neighborhood Grant which the band has been facilitating for the past three years.

Miller said the band has offered to provide the city a total of \$200,000 through the end of this year to get the program up and going and to hire a program supervisor.

Then if the program is deemed successful, the band will provide an additional \$200,000 to carry the program through 2019.

It has been seven years since the city has had a recreation program supervisor when the city had to pull the plug on the position due to the budget crisis.

Miller said the city is going to have to move quickly to implement the program so as to retain funding for 2019.

Funding will cover the costs of course/program instructors, volunteer stipends, materials and supplies, online reservation software, and other supervisors salary. Miller said she anticipates the supervisor position compensation will be about \$100,000 annually.

**"I have found the responses to be very interesting. I think we can look forward to a very successful and diverse recreation program this summer."**

**KRISTINA MILLER**

*"At least 300 children and youth must participate in the program by December 31,"* Miller said.

In an effort to establish successful programs and courses, Miller has met with Corning Union Elementary School District Superintendent Rick Fitzpatrick regarding collaboration opportunities with the district.

# THE **POWER** OF *story*

ELEVATING LOCAL  
LEADERSHIP THROUGH  
DATA STORYTELLING

In a region like ours—rich in heart, potential, and community pride—data too often sits on a shelf, underutilized or misunderstood. Corning Promise recognized this challenge and saw an opportunity to change the narrative. This spring, they brought local leaders, advocates, and changemakers together for a powerful four-month journey titled *The Power of Story: A Data-Telling Series*. The series was designed to bridge the gap between raw data and relatable stories that drives understanding and prompts actions — the impact.

*Why use storytelling?* Because stories stick —they persuade and move people to action. When paired with credible data, they can shift mindsets, build support, and drive meaningful change in any sector.

Each monthly session featured national thought leaders who specialize in transforming data into compelling narratives that resonate with audiences. From city council members and public health officials to educators and nonprofit leaders, leaders from across Tehama County left with renewed insight and a practical toolkit for connecting the dots between information and inspiration.

**Session One**, led by Jack Hess of CivicLab, focused on *making the invisible visible*. Hess challenged participants to reveal what's often hidden—such as barriers faced by families, students, or underserved populations—and bring those realities to light through relational, system-level storytelling. The message was clear: authentic leadership starts with visibility and empathy.

**Session Two** featured Andy Krackov of Hillcrest Advisors, who shared insights on how to choose the right visuals and the importance of transforming complex data into understandable stories. From simplifying charts to

crafting narratives that appeal to both the head and the heart, Krackov reminded us that dashboards don't move people, stories do.

**Session Three** brought in the FrameWorks Institute's Dr. Criscillia Benford and Dr. Anna Marie Trester, who guided attendees through the power of *framing*. By placing data within a larger social or systemic context, they emphasized how the way we present information can shape understanding and drive collective action. Their advice? Begin with a shared aspiration and use story to connect.

Throughout the series, one thread remained constant — we must lead with empathy, clarity, and intentionality. By understanding our audiences, embracing simplicity, and anchoring our messages with purpose, we can help our communities not just *hear* the data, but *feel* it.

Corning Promise's investment in this series wasn't just about professional development—it was about cultivating a culture of change makers who can transform information into action. Because in the end, *the power of a story isn't just about how we tell it. It's about captivating people to drive action.*

The Power of Story: A Data-Telling Series was presented in partnership with the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indian Tribe through Corning Promise (Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood), Expect More Tehama, and First 5 Tehama.

# A LASTING GIFT: READING

The Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians, in collaboration with the Tehama County Library, are introducing a new collection of Native American literature. These books represent works spanning generations by Native and Non-Native authors. **They provide the perspectives of diverse cultures and experiences of indigenous peoples.** The collection of books includes non-fiction and fictional pieces that are diverse enough to appeal to young children, youth, and adults. The books will be catalogued in the Corning library on Third Street in Corning, CA and made available for check-out by the public.

The book collection is part of the ongoing effort by the Tribe **to promote literacy throughout the community,** beginning with young children. All parents want their children to do well in school, and books are essential to their early learning. As young children are read to, they build their vocabulary and other early reading skills. A recent study out of Ohio State showed that **children that are read multiple books daily will have heard over a million more words by the age of five.**

One of the authors of study explained, *“Kids who hear more vocabulary words are going to be better prepared to see those words in print when they enter school... they are likely to pick up reading skills more quickly and easily.”*<sup>[i]</sup> Children who are read to are given a lasting gift.

The benefits of regular reading extend to young people as well. Reading in elementary and middle school provides children a huge advantage. **Elementary students who**

**read thirty minutes or more a day have significantly larger vocabularies and better thinking skills.** Not surprisingly, avid readers become better writers. These benefits continue to grow as children enter secondary school. Further, **high school students who engage in reading for pleasure get higher grades in English, mathematics, science, and history than their non-reading peers.**<sup>[ii]</sup> There is similar research that the effects of reading for pleasure extends into college.

The Tribe is hoping to draw Native and Non-native readers alike to the library to enjoy the fiction and non-fiction books. These books will **instill a greater appreciation of our continent’s diverse Indigenous peoples, histories and cultures.** Some of these books contain oral traditions and stories that have been passed on for generations. Reading these books helps us engage in conversation with the past. Books, as Barbara Tuchman reminds us, *“are carriers of civilization. Without books, history remains silent.”*<sup>[iii]</sup> Books can bring change. They can increase our understanding and can even change our hearts.

The Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood initiative (“Corning Promise”) continues to support projects that improve the developmental and educational outcomes in the Corning-Rancho Tehama communities. This is one of the many literacy projects supported by Corning Promise, the community arm of the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indian tribe.

**NATIVE AMERICAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS**  
Recommended by *Native Readers*

**BOOKS FOR PRESCHOOL**  
**Sweetest Kulu**  
By Calina Kalok (fruit)  
Inhibit Media, Inc. 2014  
**Fry Bread**  
By Kevin Noble Maillard (Seminole)  
Rising Brook Press, 2019  
**Wild Berries**  
by Julie Flett (Cree-Metis)  
Simply Read books, 2013  
**My Heart Fills With Happiness**  
By Monique Gray Smith (Cree, Lakota)  
Simply Read books, 2013

**BOOKS FOR MIDDLE GRADES (4-7)**  
**The Birchbark House**  
By Louise Erdrich (Ojibwa)  
Hyperion, 1999  
**How I Became a Ghost**  
By Tim Tingle (Choctaw)  
The Road Runner Press, 2013  
**Skeleton Man**  
By Joseph Bruchac (Abenaki)  
HarperTrophy, 2001  
**Indian Shoes**  
By Cynthia Leitich Smith (Muscooge Creek)  
Harper Collins 2002

**BOOKS FOR EARLY ELEMENTARY (K-3)**  
**Jingle Dancer**  
By Cynthia Leitich Smith (Muscooge Creek)  
Harcourt Inc, 2000  
**When We Were Alone**  
By David A. Robertson (Cree)  
Highwater Press, 2016  
**The Good Luck Cat**  
By Joy Harjo (Muscooge Creek)  
Simply Read Books, 2013  
**We are Grateful: Otsaliliga**  
By Tracy Sorell (Cherokee)  
Charlesbridge, 2018

**BOOKS FOR HIGH SCHOOL (8-12)**  
**If I Ever Get Out of Here**  
By Eric Gameworth (Chondaga)  
Arthur A. Levine Books, 2013  
**Hearts Unbroken**  
By Cynthia Leitich Smith (Muscooge Creek)  
Candlewick, 2018  
**The Lesser Blessed**  
By Richard Van Camp  
Douglas and McIntyre, 1996  
**An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States for Young People**  
By Roxane Dunbar-Ortiz  
Beacon Press, 2019

Find these books and MORE at:  
**CORNING LIBRARY**  
740 THIRD ST., CORNING

**CORNING PROMISE**  
Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians

**TEHAMA COUNTY LIBRARY**

[i] Jessica A. R. Logan, Laura M. Justice, Melike Yumus, Leydi Johana Chaparro-Moreno. When Children Are Not Read to at Home. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, 2019; 1 DOI: 10.1097/DBP.0000000000000657

[ii] Whitten, Christy, Sandra Labby, and Sam L. Sullivan. “The Impact of Pleasure Reading on Academic Success.” *The Journal of Multidisciplinary Graduate Research* 2, no. 4 (2016): 48-64. <https://www.shsu.edu/academics/education/journal-of-multidisciplinary-gr...>

[iii] [Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Nov. 1980), pp. 16-32]

# BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH BASKETBALL

## *A City of Corning Recreation Program*

The City of Corning Recreation Program promotes wellness by offering activities encouraging physical fitness and healthy lifestyles. One such initiative, the Youth Basketball Program, supports participants' physical health while fostering community connections. Running annually from January to March, this

program invites children in kindergarten through eighth grade to learn basketball fundamentals in a structured yet fun environment. The turnout in 2025 reflects the popularity of the youth basketball program, with approximately 100 children participating; this number is double the participation from last year.



At the heart of the program are the local high school coaches—Nate Borer, the varsity basketball coach, and Les Pitner, the JV coach. They teach young children basketball skills and valuable lessons about sportsmanship while also mentoring high school students and developing their skills in coaching and refereeing.

Both coaches recognize the meaningful impact that the sport of basketball has on children and youth, as well as the community. Nate Borer, the varsity coach, shared, *"It's been incredible to see the growth of this program. The program helps children stay active and improve their physical fitness. But even more than that, we're building connections, helping kids learn how to work together, support each other, and promote positive values around community building."*

Les Pitner shared the values that can be gained from basketball, *"Our recreational basketball program isn't just about teaching the game—it's about building confidence, teamwork, and a love for staying active. Every time a child steps on the court, they're learning life skills that go far beyond basketball. That's what makes this program so important."*

The City of Corning's Recreation Program pays high school students who coach and referee, provided they meet the legal age requirement for employment. This opportunity



gives them valuable job experience, empowers them to give back to their community, and plays a vital role in shaping them as leaders both on and off the court. Kaidan Raker, a high school referee, commented about his experience, *“Being hired for the last two years as a ref it’s been awesome to see the growth. This year the teams were drafted making it a lot more fair and fun for the kids. I also love seeing kids that are passionate about basketball the way I was when I was their age. So I really enjoy explaining the rules and more to the younger generation. I can’t wait to watch the next generation of basketball players keep improving and keeping their love of the game.”*

One of the challenges the program faces each year is the lack of a dedicated space for practices and games. Without a gym of its own, the program relies on the cooperation of the middle school and high school to provide space for practices and games. Recognizing the program’s value to individuals and the community, the Corning Union Elementary School District has allowed the City of Corning to use its space.

“I can’t wait to watch the next generation of basketball players keep improving and keeping their love of the game.”

KAIDAN RAKER

*“The City of Corning recreation basketball program is a great example of how sports can unite a community,”* said Christina Meeds, Recreation Coordinator for the City of Corning. *“It’s not just about teaching kids how to play basketball. It’s about creating connections, providing a place for them to grow, improving their quality of life through fitness, and giving them role models who are passionate about helping them succeed.”*

This program has been a slam dunk for everyone!



# JUNIOR CARDETTES

*Building a Socially-Connected Vibrant Community*

## **Building a Stronger Future Together: A Partnership Between Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians - Corning Promise (Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood) and the City of Corning**

The Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indian Tribe - Corning Promise (Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood) envisions a community where all children have the opportunities to reach their full potential and achieve lifelong success. Since 2017, the Tribe has been honored to steward the Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood ("Corning Promise") initiative, collaborating with a diverse group of organizations to implement cradle-to-career solutions.

A key partner in this collective impact effort is the City of Corning Recreation Department, which has played a pivotal role in **providing**



**recreation and enrichment opportunities to children and youth of varying ages.** The 2023-2024 reporting year, the Recreation Department **engaged 1,254 participants across 40 distinct classes.** One of the standout achievements this year was the launch of the Junior Cardettes program. In partnership with Corning High School, this program allowed younger students to learn dance and drill team skills from high school students. Trained by 10 high school drill team members, the Junior Cardettes performed at Corning High School, parades, and other community events. **These opportunities have fostered physical and social health and promoted engagement to strengthen community health.**

Christina Meeds, Recreation Coordinator for the City of Corning, shares, *“Our partnership with Corning Promise and the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians has been a game-changer for the youth in our community. The Junior Cardettes program and the involvement of high school students as leaders in other programs, such as the youth basketball leagues, have brought new opportunities for local kids and strengthened the community. We’re seeing young people take pride in their city and*

*school and watching them grow as leaders is inspiring. We’re excited to continue expanding these opportunities.”*

For the past several years, the program has benefited from the dedicated involvement of high school student volunteers; this year, there were 28 volunteers. These students have not only gained valuable skills but have also contributed to the success and sustainability of the recreation programs.

Dawna Shchedrov, Project Director for Corning Promise, explains, *“The collaboration between the City of Corning and the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians- Corning Promise (Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood) initiative has truly exemplified the power of collective impact. The success of programs like the Junior Cardettes and the engagement of high school students in volunteer roles are key steps toward creating a stronger, more connected community.*

*By working together, we’re not just providing kids with opportunities—we’re building a foundation of support, leadership, and resilience that will carry them into the future.”*

This ongoing partnership continues to create meaningful opportunities for local youth, foster community engagement, and build the foundation for a brighter future for all.

**“We’re seeing young people take pride in their city and school and watching them grow as leaders is inspiring. We’re excited to continue expanding these opportunities.”**

**CHRISTINA MEEDS**





# BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH DANCE

## *The Corning Country Cardettes Impact*

The City of Corning's Recreation and Enrichment Programming has been thriving, not only as a result of funding provided by the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indian Tribe and its leadership but also due to a combination of strong partnerships and the commitment of community members who unselfishly give of their time and talents. One such group is the Corning Country Cardettes, Corning Union High School District's drill team, who are not only making their mark with their impressive performances but also teach a group of young children a combination of skills to perform choreographed routines at events and find time to teach a diversity of classes that promote health

and well-being, build community connections, and encourages skill building.

For the past three years, the Corning Country Cardettes have been teaching foundational drill team skills to kindergarten to grade 8 students, instilling values of discipline, teamwork, and respect. Their passion for using their skills to positively impact the lives of younger children has led them to lead a variety of other recreational and enrichment classes, including hip-hop, ballet folklorico, little kids tumbling, gymnastics, and ballet.

The dedicated Corning Country Cardettes team is making a powerful difference in strengthening

the community by sharing their talents and contributing to the growth of others. Through their consistent engagement, positive role modeling, and a passion for service that benefits others, they inspire unity and contribute to the creation of a stronger community for everyone.

*“The Cardettes have shown us that when we are willing to share our talents, we can make a difference,”* says Christina Meeds, Recreation Coordinator. *“Their influence extends far beyond the space where they teach; they are shaping confidence and resilience in young children and making the community more vibrant and appealing.”*



With the help of the Cardettes and other community members, the City of Corning Recreation Program is creating spaces where children and families can come together and strengthen social ties, making the community a place where families enjoy living. This is especially meaningful, considering that the people within the community are the contributors to the town’s well-being.

Our rural community is rich in what matters most: the people who care deeply and act selflessly –every effort and every skill makes a meaningful difference.

**“The Cardettes have shown us that when we are willing to share our talents, we can make a difference... they are shaping confidence and resilience in young children and making the community more vibrant and appealing.”**

**CHRISTINA MEEDS**



# CITY OF CORNING

# JUNIOR GIANTS

Building Health, Character, and Community Through Baseball

The City of Corning's partnership with the Giants Community Fund flagship initiative, the Junior Giants program, offers local youth an incredible opportunity to learn essential life lessons through baseball. Designed for youth ages 5 to 18 from underserved communities across California, Oregon, and Nevada, Junior Giants is a free, non-competitive program that promotes character development, education, health, and bullying prevention. It serves as both a sports league and an educational initiative, encouraging children to engage in healthy activities while promoting literacy.



In 2024, over 110 children and youth from Corning and Rancho Tehama participated in the Junior Giants 8-week summer program. With the guidance of structured practice plans and local support, participants engaged in activities that fostered athletic, academic, and social development. They built physical and cognitive skills – such as hand-eye coordination, throwing and catching, batting techniques, focus, and teamwork while working towards reading milestones as part of the program’s literacy initiative. A core part of the Junior Giants is its reading program, which aligns baseball-themed goals with reading achievement. This emphasis on literacy helps combat summer learning loss and inspires a lifelong interest in reading. One of the most memorable rewards is an invitation to the Junior Giants Festival at Oracle Park in San Francisco, California. At the park, the Corning children interact with youth from other communities across the three states, meet key staff members, and participate in a day filled with activities that celebrate their hard work.

*“The Junior Giants program is an incredible opportunity for our kids, not only to learn the game of baseball but also to build valuable life skills,”* said Jesenia Rodriguez, Recreation Coordinator for the City of Corning. *“It teaches lessons in health, teamwork, and the importance of reading. Watching their faces light up when they find out they have been*

**“ I am proud to be part of something that brings such meaningful and lasting experiences to our youth.”**

**JESENIA RODRIGUEZ**

*invited to Oracle Park is priceless. I am proud to be part of something that brings such meaningful and lasting experiences to our youth.”*

The Giants Community Fund equips participants with nearly every item they need to play – gloves, helmets, safety gear, and athletic attire – which allows families with financial constraints to enroll their child in the program. The City of Corning Recreation Program is committed to ensuring every child interested in the program has the opportunity to join and gain the benefits of physical activity, teamwork, discipline, and greater mental strength.

Corning Promise has supported the program by dedicating resources to support the coordinator, who has worked tirelessly to ensure its success. The program’s expansion and popularity in Corning reflects its impact.

*“Being able to offer a program that provides so many benefits to kids and ensuring it is accessible to families is something we, collectively, are proud of,”* said Dawna Shchedrov, Corning Promise Director.



Looking to the future, the City of Corning plans to continue the Junior Giants program even after the grant funding to support the recreation program sunsets.



# IMPACT REPORTS & STORIES

*Corning Promise highlights progress through data and impact reports, sharing with the public the ongoing success of various programs and partnerships. Below are a sample of the stories that reflect the dedication and outcomes of the work:*

## 2017 Highlights

- Corning Union Elementary School District **offered a special summer school program for 75 students** in need of academic assistance.
- Tehama County Health Services Agency **served 14 teen and young pregnant or parenting mothers** and their infants through twice weekly visits by trained Healthy Families America home visitors.
- **30 kindergarten through second grade teachers** participated in a three-day summer institute focused on reading and writing instruction.
- Licensed mental health counselors **served over 500 students** attending schools in the Corning elementary and high school districts, which included having counselors available to work directly with students and families during the recent crisis in Rancho Tehama.
- Tehama County Department of Education has instituted a series of trainings for early educators.
- Corning High School created a new construction trades program with updated equipment.
- Corning Union Elementary School District teachers are participating in **ongoing professional development** including in-classroom coaching assistance.
- Instructional assistants are assisting with classroom teachers to **implement research-based instructional strategies** in K-2 classrooms
- The City of Corning's RESTORE program is now **linking juvenile offenders with adult advocates** and providing mental health and substance abuse treatment throughout Tehama County.
- **80 high school students are participating in dual-enrollment classes** co-taught by college and high school faculty for which they receive college and high school credit.

## Corning Promise Completes First Year

The Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indian's Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood Initiative is completing its first year of implementation. Corning Promise serves all children, youth, and families living in Corning, California. Additionally, Corning Promise serves students attending Corning Union Elementary School District and Corning Union High School District schools but who may live outside of Corning.

Corning Promise's mission is to significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children and youth through: a) supporting the development of great schools within the Corning Union Elementary and Corning Union High School districts; b) identifying and increasing the capacity of partner organizations that are focused on achieving results for children and youth; c) instituting a continuum of cradle-to-career solutions of both educational programs and family and community supports; d) integrating programs so that solutions are implemented effectively and efficiently across agencies; and e) developing the local infrastructure of systems and resources needed to sustain and scale up proven, effective solutions within Tehama County.

Corning Promise supports the development of great schools. The majority of grant resources are used to enhance the participating preschools and school districts' core programs. This focus includes direct services to students and ongoing professional development for educators. Direct services include both in-classroom supports and extended year-round programming targeting reading, writing, and English development. Community services supplement these school-based programs. Community services included counseling, mentoring, and after school and summer academic and youth enrichment programs.



## BUILDING A STRONGER FUTURE

*Together*

## A BI-DIRECTIONAL APPROACH

Since 2017, the Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood (“Corning Promise”) initiative, led by the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians, has **invested over \$16 million in cradle-to-career solutions** to support student success and community development in Corning and Rancho Tehama. Named for Everett Freeman, a revered Tribal leader who helped the Tribe regain federal recognition, this initiative has become a cornerstone of the Tribe’s commitment to empowering the region’s youth and families.

*“Our community has always prioritized building opportunities that allow children and families to thrive,”* said Chairman Brandin Paya of the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians. *“The Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood operationalizes that vision on a larger scale, honoring Everett Freeman’s legacy by ensuring every child and family has access to education, wellness, and opportunity.”*

Funded by two consecutive grants, the initiative emphasizes collaboration, bringing together schools, community organizations, and leaders to address systemic challenges. Its comprehensive solutions meet the physical, emotional, social, and academic needs of students. *“As equal partners in the community, we’re working together to address complex issues,”* Chairman Paya explained. *“This initiative unites Tribal and regional partners toward the shared goal of becoming stronger and more resilient by combining resources, strengths, and perspectives.”*

# RECIPROCITY

## A PILLAR OF CORNING PROMISE

*A key theme of the initiative is reciprocity—a bi-directional practice deeply rooted in Indigenous traditions. Through reciprocal collaboration, the Tribe and its partners have created initiatives that benefit the entire community.*

- **Supported early literacy** in seven PreK programs, leading to significant growth.
- **Expanded home visitation programs**, providing early learning services to 30 additional children over four years.
- **Funded core and supplemental K-12 school improvement efforts** in English-language arts, reading, mathematics, dual enrollment, and Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways.
- **Provided free school-based therapy services**, delivering over 1,900 counseling sessions in the 2023-24 school year.
- **Supported a community-based diversion program** to redirect and improve outcomes for youth.
- Partnered with the City of Corning to **expand recreation programs**, growing from a single swimming program to over 40 diverse activities serving 1,200 participants annually.
- **Supported cultural education efforts**, including cataloging 200 Native American-authored books in Tehama County Library and collaborating on Native-inspired murals across Corning.

*“These reciprocal practices demonstrate our shared values and strengthen the relationship between the Tribe and the broader community,” Chairman Paya shared. “They are instrumental in addressing educational gaps and creating spaces of inclusivity and understanding.”*

### Aligning with AB 1821

The passing of AB 1821, which requires Local Education Agencies to include Native American treatment and perspectives in social studies curriculums, underscores the significance of the Promise Neighborhood’s work. *“Our efforts align closely with AB 1821,”* said Chairman Paya. *“Both frameworks emphasize reciprocity, creating shared spaces where mutual respect fosters stronger, more inclusive relationships. This legislation is an important step toward building respect and understanding in our communities.”*

### A Commitment to Sustainability

With state funding concluding this year, the Tribe remains dedicated to ensuring the initiative’s long-term success. *“Sustainability is always a challenge for large-scale efforts, but our commitment to this work will not waver,”* said Chairman Paya. *“By working collaboratively with our partners, we will continue to ensure every student has access to the resources they need to succeed.”*

As the Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood continues to shape the community, the Tribe’s deep-rooted commitment to development remains steadfast. *“Everett Freeman’s legacy reminds us of the power of resilience and collaboration,”* reflected Chairman Paya. *“Through this work, we honor his legacy and create a brighter future for our children and families.”*

# IGNITING "COMMUNITY" IN CORNING

Creating recreation opportunities for Corning local children and youth to enjoy has been in the hearts of Corning's leaders for many years. The long-awaited recreation revitalization came in 2018 when the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians contributed Promise Neighborhood funds to the City of Corning. The goal of the recreation program has been to enhance learning and promote healthy lifestyles through quality educational and recreational programming, enriching the lives of children and young adults living in Corning.

Six months from the start of the first activity, the City of Corning recreation program had **launched 41 programs, taught nearly all 2nd graders from the local school district swimming lessons,** and enrolled more than 500 children and youth in a range of

recreation programs. In 2019, many more records have been broken with hundreds of students participating in the growing variety of classes, including robotics, taekwondo, photography, ballet, creative writing, dancing, painting, and many other enriching classes.

Not only are the programs fun for the participants, the physical activity contributes to their mental health and quality of life and social bonds are developed around shared interest. Further, the programming has strengthened partnerships. Kristina Miller, Corning City Manager remarks, *"From the start, this program has brought community leaders together."* Partnerships have been numerous, *"from principals and superintendents to churches, service clubs, and the Senior Center, individuals, and groups are working collectively to drive the program's success."*

Without the contributions of time and space by local organizations the number of offerings would remain limited, but, instead, the numbers are impressive even without a dedicated recreation center. A listing of a few of the collaborators shows the community is driving the success. The Fire Department has offered its kitchen for children to hold culinary classes; the Senior Center has hosted kiddie crafts, increasing opportunity for intergenerational socialization; the City Council Chambers

conference room has become the site where Tae Kwon Do classes have been offered; and, the newly renovated Rodgers Theater is the venue where dancing classes are being held almost daily. The shared appreciation for the Corning's greatest asset, the children, has ignited community cohesiveness.

Corning locals, young and retired, and college students are sharing their talent with the children in Corning. One recent high school graduate with a talent for dance has committed her time to teach children to express themselves through movement; a retired Chamber of Commerce manager, with a degree in music, has taught voice lessons to youth; a City Council member teaches children to create art and craft projects; and a Corning Union Elementary School District (CUESD) teacher develops student interest in Science, Technology, Engineering

and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines through fun, hands-on learning experiences – robotics, building robots, videogame programming.

The City of Corning has set a gold standard for partnering to achieve the outcome of increasing recreation offerings to the community's youth. Additionally, they have implemented an exemplary recreation program that provides structured, supervised

activities to youth, which may

well serve as a crime prevention tool for the community. Miller's rationale is, *"... monies can be spent up front in a more proactive approach or on the back end after trouble has already occurred. Prevention is a much better tool."* The recreation program is supplying the support, opportunities, and programs to increase skills and pro-social attitudes.

The City of Corning is seeking to sustain the recreation program beyond the funding life by pursuing different forms of funding. Miller shared: *"We are dovetailing off of its success to remediate an area of blight in the community and revitalize our downtown core."* Prop 68 revitalization grant, a grant that is aimed at improving and enhancing local and regional parks, is one funding source the City is pursuing. If all goes as planned, by March 2022, there will be a recreation center, amphitheater, splash pad, and safe family spaces in Corning.



# A VIBRANT RECREATION DEPARTMENT

*was a dream deferred for the city of Corning*

*“About ten years ago the city did have a recreation program which was just beginning to be developed,” says Kristina Miller, Corning City Manager. “Then the Great Recession happened and they lost the coordinator.”*

Today, through the close collaboration between the city and Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians, with infusion of Corning Promise resources, and the input of the people, the Corning Recreation Department is realizing a vision dreamed a decade ago.

*“Through the Promise Neighborhood grant, we are able to create new and additional recreation opportunities within the greater Corning area,” adds Miller. What’s best is that the core of these **opportunities are based upon a community survey of interests in which over 600 residents responded.***

*“We’re taking those responses and using them as a focus but we’re not limiting ourselves by any means,” says Miller, who is excited by the breadth and creativity of classes being made available. Every course must have a youth enrichment/literacy component to enhance it, which means that the new Tae Kwon Do classes will also cover the history of the martial art.*

Students are now able to learn everything from video game coding, which transfers to the very marketable skill of computer coding, to vocal performance, which can enhance self-esteem. A princess camp will set imaginations on fire and ballet classes will get kids moving. Digital photography classes will open doors of creativity while a Pinterest Project class will help students take projects from the popular website into their real lives. Building vocabulary is an implicit goal of all courses, which weaves in the larger goals of Corning Promise and a child’s success in school.

Of great pride to all involved was the recent offering of free swimming lessons to all second graders in the

Corning area. *“We provided four days of swim lessons with the goal that every kid, if they fell in the pool, would be able to save their life,”* says Miller. Additional lessons were offered to 30 families needing support beyond the initial offerings to meet this goal. **216 second graders participated in the initial offering**, demonstrating a clear desire for the opportunity.

*“I would like to see a very robust program for students to get them very healthy and active after school and in the summer months,”* adds Miller. Fortunately, she has many partners who agree with her and are lining up to support the efforts. Both Corning school districts offer their facilities for recreational classes after hours. This means that the most frequently requested course offering — baking and cooking classes — will be able to occur.

Another point of pride is the inter-generational bonding that occurs with events such as Family Game Day, complete with crafting, that will be offered to students through the Senior Center. *“It really bridges the generation gap and it really benefits both sides,”* says Miller of the event. *“It’s been really neat to see how all of the partners have come together to say, “This is best for kids, so let’s do it.”*

These opportunities are also good for the community as a whole. The local organizers recognize the value of the social bonds created when people gather around food and entertainment. *“People want to reside in places where it’s fun to live,”* adds Miller. That’s one reason the City of Corning and the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians have partnered for four Food Truck Tuesday nights in the city. Notoriously laborious to organize, the events are exceedingly successful. *“The community loves it,”* says Miller. *“And that’s what we’re here for. To serve the community.”*

# BUILDING A BRIGHTER FUTURE **TOGETHER**

*Through Corning Promise, we are collectively working to ensure that every child in Corning and Rancho Tehama has the opportunity to succeed. This work is about more than just educational outcomes; it's about building a stronger, healthier, and more resilient community. We are excited to continue this journey together, as we build on the legacy of Everett Freeman and create a future where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.*

