

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

Business leaders take us into future

By **Sandy Harmsen**,
Executive Director of the Workforce Investment Board and Director of the County of San Bernardino Workforce Development Department

In 2009, Patton Sales Corporation, Southern California's premier, full-line metal and machinery distributor, needed to hire employees to meet new customer demand.

The county of San Bernardino Workforce Investment Board worked with the firm's president, Jon Novack, to create a program that put eight people to work and offset the costs of training. As a result, Jon Novack became passionate about workforce development. When Jon called 4th District Supervisor Gary Ovitt to express his appreciation for the program, Ovitt recognized Jon's potential. He appointed Novack to the County of San Bernardino Workforce Investment Board, and today he serves as vice chairman.

Many local business leaders share this passion.

Together these leaders make up the County of San Bernardino Workforce Investment Board. They volunteer countless hours to develop programs that reduce San Bernardino County's unemployment rate and increase opportunities for residents.

"As business owners, serving as a member of the Workforce Investment Board means creating programs that work on a local level," said Novack. "By partnering with area businesses, educators and government, we identify in-demand job sectors, design programs in partnership with local training organizations and colleges, and match the County's unemployed with well-paying jobs."

These business leaders set policy that directs business growth and job development.

In order to develop programs that will benefit the economy long-term, the Workforce Investment Board recently convened to create a strategic plan for workforce development in San Bernardino County.

During that time, the Workforce Investment Board members reviewed target reports from economists assessing the County's growing and declining industries. The Board also evaluated surveys taken from thousands of area businesses, shared personal expertise and developed policy for future workforce development in San Bernardino County. The result was a five-year plan that outlined outreach efforts, program emphasis, action items, and timelines.

The five-year plan was submitted to the California Workforce Investment Board and is currently awaiting approval. It is a collaboration of the county's best resources compiled by successful local business leaders.

"Not only is serving on the Workforce Investment Board improving our county's economic future, it is a chance to give back," Jon Novack shares.

"Nothing compares to watching this program work in an individual's life: seeing someone transform from joblessness and hardship to owning a car and building a career. Bottom line, the Workforce Investment Board is helping our friends and neighbors."

As the Workforce Investment Board expands its reach, opportunities increase for business owners to take part in continuing San Bernardino County's success. With the creation of the five-year plan, the Workforce Investment Board is accepting new members committed to workforce development.

"This partnership among private business, education and government is the key to economic recovery," said Workforce Investment Board chairman Tony Myrell. "As we continue to pursue aggressive plans for improvement, the Workforce Investment Board is calling experienced business leaders with passion and commitment to step up. For those willing to work hard, this is a great opportunity to drive positive change in San Ber-

nardino County."

Business leaders interested in joining the County of San Bernardino Workforce Investment Board may get more information by contacting Kristi Sandberg at Kristi.sandberg@wdd.sbcounty.gov or 909-387-9886.

