



PHOTO BY AMY SYLVESTRI

Ghirardelli Chocolate, which is headquartered in San Leandro, has pledged \$45,000 to benefit the city's public schools over the next three years.

The San Leandro Education Foundation (SLED) has announced that Ghirardelli Chocolate Company has pledged \$15,000 a year for three years to the SLED100 campaign.

This gift places Ghirardelli at the forefront of local businesses and residents who are committed to improving the quality of public education in our community.

SLED is an independent, not-for-profit organization dedicated to raising resources and improving the lives and education of children in the San Leandro Unified School District.

The foundation's areas of focus include enrichment, health and safety, technology, volunteering, and supporting the San Leandro High School Arts Education Center.

“On behalf of Ghirardelli Chocolate Company and our employees, I wish to express our appreciation for the services we receive as a corporate citizen of San Leandro and the hospitality extended to us by the local community,” said Ghirardelli CEO Marty Thompson. “Our contribution to the San Leandro Education Foundation is both an expression of our gratitude and recognition of our responsibility to the community in which we operate. We are proud to be a member of the San Leandro community and are pleased to be making an investment in the education and future development of the young citizens of San Leandro.”

Ghirardelli, which is headquartered in San Leandro, also plans to craft an internship program for San Leandro High School graduates currently enrolled in a college or university. The company hopes to launch the program during the summer of 2013.

“Ghirardelli has gone above and beyond in its commitment to educating San Leandro’s future workforce and helping SLED to create the infrastructure needed to grow the scope of the Foundation’s impact,” said SLED President Deborah Cox. “We are thankful for Ghirardelli’s generous investment in our local public schools and look forward to working together in the future.”

Ghirardelli joins the growing list of companies whose commitments have shown they are strong supporters of public education.

The SLED100 community includes Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, OSIssoft, Wells Fargo Foundation, Westlake Development Partners, Drake’s Brewing, Bayfair Center and Paradiso.

SLED also recently announced a new addition to its board of directors — Mitch Huitema has been appointed.

Huitema is an active member of our community and a strong supporter of public schools. She is

the mother of two boys in elementary school, has her own financial planning business, and is co-owner of Zocalo Coffeehouse with her husband, Tim Holmes.

They have used Zocalo Coffeehouse to bring community together and increase community involvement and political activity in San Leandro.

“Our schools are the foundation of our community,” Huitema said. “Communities that recognize this and support their schools are rewarded with happier, more prosperous children, higher property values, safer streets, and happier, more active residents. I’ve joined the board of SLED because I believe it is key to helping our community support our schools.”

Huitema is one of the founding members of the RAMP organization, which created the Math and Science Challenge Program. She serves on the board of directors for RAMP as the group’s treasurer.

Additionally, Huitema has served on the board of directors of the Broadmoor Neighborhood Association for many years. She was treasurer for six of those years and is currently the head of the internet sub-committee.

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