

Garden Pathways

2009 "Woman with a Heart for Bakersfield"

Susan Handy



Susan Handy has a heart that is intent on bringing out the best in others – the best in family and friends, the best in her community, and the best in her profession. Susan's ardent passion for the advancement of others translates into ceaseless advocacy and endless work on their behalf. Her palpable kindness, boundless energy, and indefatigable positive attitude permeate all aspects of her service.

Susan is a beloved driving force and advocate for adult education both locally and at the state level. Currently principal at the Bakersfield Adult School, which serves over 28,000 students, Susan has brought continual enrichment and growth to the program over the last eleven years. As a result of her assiduous commitment to collaboration, Bakersfield Adult School now offers career technical education that will help to fill the critical nursing shortage. Susan epitomizes the core values that she espouses to her staff: integrity, commitment, service, positive attitude, kindness, belief, passion, focus, perseverance, and pride. She conveys an infectious zeal, "I love what I do! Teaching the adult student not only affects their lives, but the lives of their children, and their children's children." Susan particularly takes pleasure in assisting single parents and displaced homemakers into self-sufficiency through education.

The impact of Susan's exceptional leadership extends to the California State Department of Education, where she has taken on key roles, including on the CalPro Advisory Board, Field Partnership Team, Gender Equity Task Force, and as ACSA Region 11 State Board Representative for Adult Education. Susan began her career as a registered nurse and coordinator with the Kern County Health Department. She has served as a nursing instructor and as director of the Kern Health Consortium for the State of California. Susan remains active in the health field, currently as the assistant director of the Bakersfield Adult School Vocational Nursing Program.

Susan liberally has given of her time through numerous community activities, including Kern Economic Development Corporation Board Member, Workforce Investment Board Youth Council, Leadership Bakersfield Advisory Council, Junior Achievement Executive Board Member, Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce, and Children's Miracle Network. She has garnered many honors for her extensive service and outstanding leadership. In 2008, she was recognized as Kern High School District Counselors Association "Administrator of the Year."

A fourth-generation Kern County native, Susan received her bachelor's degree in nursing from Fresno State University and her master's in counseling from California Lutheran University. She has been married for over twenty years to Rick, her "wonderful husband." Susan is the proud mother of six children, all Bakersfield residents, and nine "beautiful grandchildren." Susan has two sisters, one brother, and her 86-year old mother who instilled strong work ethics and family values in her children's lives.