ALLIANCE FOR ARTS

County pushes arts education

Sentinel staff report

SANTA CRUZ — Local educators and representatives of local arts organization launched the Santa Cruz County Alliance for Arts Education earlier this month in an effort to promote arts education in county schools.

County Supervisor Neal Coonerty, Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools Michael Watkins and Ann Morhauser, CEO of Annieglass, spearheaded the effort and will be hosting an initial meeting with the Alliance Leadership Team within the next two months.

The alliance was formed with a vision that every student from pre-K through 12th grade should have access to a quality arts education, which organizers say is an investment in the well-being of the larger community.

“Science and math without art gets you another IBM or Xerox,” Morhauser said at Thursday’s meeting. “Science and math with art gets you another Apple.”

Advocates say arts education provides a wealth of benefits to students, including improved school attendance and improved academic performance in all disciplines. It also can help develop skills in critical thinking, flexibility and innovation.

The team will be working to develop an action plan to distribute to local schools to help promote arts education at the state level. Budget cuts have prompted many school districts to limit or even eliminate teaching visual and performing arts, and the county’s new alliance is working to build a statewide network of local advocacy coalitions in the wake of these cuts.

“I am honored to be a part of this process, and thrilled that so many people with varying roles in the community have come to help leverage support for arts education in our schools,” said Sarah Brothers, the arts education and outreach coordinator for the Cultural Council of Santa Cruz County.

Information about the alliance can be found at www.facebook.com and search for Santa Cruz County Alliance For Arts Education or by contacting Brothers by email at sarah@ccscc.org.