BREAKING THE GLASS BALLOT

Forum encourages women to run for public office

More than 100 attend event at Cabrillo College

By TERRI MORGAN

APTOS — There are no women on the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors. Nor are there any women from Santa Cruz County in the California State Assembly or in Congress. The dearth of local women in leadership roles prompted an ad hoc committee to organize a forum encouraging women to run for local offices.

Breaking the Glass Ballot, held Saturday at the Cabrillo College Campus, provided potential candidates with the tools and information needed to win an election.

The issue impacts all citizens, said keynote speaker Mary Hughes, the founder of Close the Gap CA. The organization’s goal is to get more women to run for the state legislature.

“We all lose out when half of the talent remains on the sidelines,” she said. Hughes said that all citizens benefit when both genders participate in politics.

“California needs the policy know-how and the leadership skills that women offer,” Hughes said. “I’m thrilled to be part of this local effort to get women elected and on boards and commissions in Santa Cruz County.”

The event was co-sponsored by Cabrillo College.

Goodman said she anticipates a handful of the women who attended the forum will run for elected office, and that far more will form and participate in organizations and get involved in local issues. Attendee Suz Howells said the forum encouraged women to take action.

“It was very positive and very engaging,” said Lisa Napier. Others agreed.

“I thought it was great,” said Ginny Gomez, who serves on three boards. “To hear other women empowering women was what I was here for.”

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State Senator Leland Yee, right, and Santa Cruz City Councilwoman Karina Cervantez, far left, listen as panelists, including Santa Cruz Mayor Hilary Bryant, Watsonville City Councilwoman Ariadne Symons, and Superior Court Judge Arturo Lopez-Bayliss share their personal experiences about breaking the glass ceiling for women in public office.

Ginny Gomez, from left, joins moderator Kathy Bisbee, and organizers Mary Talpas, Rachel Goodman, Angela Chesnut, Sandy Skees, Richelle Noroyan and Vania Benavides at the Breaking the Glass Ballot forum held Saturday at Cabrillo College.