

**American Leadership Forum Exemplary Leader Celebration
Fourth Street Summit Center, San Jose**

**Remarks by Dr. Martha Kanter, Chancellor
Foothill-De Anza Community College District
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Thank you, Connie, for that wonderful introduction. I am deeply grateful to Connie: first, for her leadership in making the Children's Discovery Museum the best in California and the nation; second for her work with Dan Keegan in placing the arts in the forefront of our awareness through First ACT; third for saying 'yes' to work on restructuring Los Lupeños de San José, when - like most of us in this room - she had no time; and, finally, and most especially, for convening the group of River Rafting Women Warriors who continue to brave the Class IV Upper Klamath each year, but mostly for making sure that I didn't fall out of the raft so that I could be here with you today!

What an honor to be the fourth Class IX recipient of this award, following in the footsteps of Rolanda Pierre-Dixon, Ned Barnholt and Gib Myers as well as so many other deserving ALF Gardner award recipients! Ann DeBusk told us that Class IX was very special. Notice I didn't say the best class, did I?

I am truly humbled to receive this leadership award in John Gardner's name for he was a role model to me and to all of us in this room. Most of you have received an email from me at one time or another during my 30 years in Silicon Valley. My emails always end with John Gardner's eloquent words, and I quote: "Families and communities are the ground-level generators and preservers of values and ethical systems. Without the continuity of the shared values that community provides, freedom cannot survive."

All of us here are members of the ALF family and the greater community of Silicon Valley. I know if John Gardner were here with us today, he would ask each of us two questions:

Are we doing what matters most?

and

Are we having the greatest impact that we can have, individually and together?

Like you, I would have to say 'yes' and 'no' to each of those question and here's why.

First, our community needs great governing boards for our public, private and non-profit organizations and agencies. We need strong board members who respect one another and are not afraid to tackle big problems. I am truly blessed to have the best board in Silicon Valley. The Foothill-De Anza board of trustees has five elected board members: Betsy Bechtel, Paul Fong, Hal Plotkin, Laura Casas Frier and Bruce Swenson. Together they are a governing board that is not afraid to take significant risks to craft a future in which we'd all like to live. What types of risks, you might ask? Risks like funding our college district's \$155 million dollar retiree medical liability inherited from the past. Unlike many of our public and private boards and city councils, they chose to act, rather than hope for a state bail out.

Like the risk to ask the voters in our cities and towns to pass a \$490 million dollar, 15-year local bond to renovate the aging facilities at Foothill and De Anza colleges and bring in 21st century classroom equipment and technology for our 44,000 students.

And, most importantly, to provide leadership to close the achievement gaps among our students, with an unrelenting focus on methods to increase the success of Latino, Black and economically disadvantaged students at our colleges.

As ALF senior fellows and community leaders, we need to assume a much more proactive role in strengthening our local boards - private, public and non-profit – so that we will benefit from the kind of good governance in which we can all take pride.

Second, we haven't done enough. If you read Joint Venture's new Index of Silicon Valley, it shows that between 2000 and 2004, the number of public charities grew by 21%, and the number of private foundations grew by 32%. But just this fall, the Mercury News reported that most people who live here give less than 3% of their earnings to charity. We haven't done enough in our personal giving and we haven't given enough time of our own time to benefit our community. Our high school graduation rates dropped again. Joint Venture said that only 22% of Latino graduates met college requirements compared to 65% of Asians and 53% of Whites. Silicon Valley's dropout rates continue to climb, with the highest drop out rates for Latino and African American students. This is unacceptable.

It is also unacceptable that our community colleges in the region have thousands of students who are ready to enter healthcare programs - to prepare for professions with good-paying jobs such as nursing, pharmacology and radiologic technology, but cannot do so because our local hospitals and the state do

not provide adequate funding for our colleges to expand these much-needed programs. As I said, we haven't done enough and we need to do more, much, much more than we have.

Third, we need to cross more boundaries than we have and widen our circle to help poor people get out of poverty. Catholic Charities reports that we have 120,000 people living in poverty here in Silicon Valley. At the same time, we have over 70,000 people with a net worth in the millions. It doesn't make sense. Only a few people in Class IX know that I ran away from home at the age of 16, flew to Los Angeles from Boston, and lived on the street to learn what it meant to live with no means of financial support. In my own naïve way, I was trying to understand a very big problem. When I returned home, my family took me back with open arms. This brings me to the importance of family.

I would not be up here accepting this award were it not for the love and support of my husband, Carl Brown, who is here with me today. Not only does he love me tirelessly despite many late night and early morning commitments to my work, but he is a constant source of inspiration to me. His work to make technology accessible for everyone - and, especially, for people with disabilities - is the kind of work that makes life better for many people, especially those with the least means in our community.

As we work to widen our circle, we must push ourselves and cross into unknown countries. Our ALF family must identify and mentor the next generation of community leaders who live and work inside our poorest communities in order to make success in life happen for those whom a better life now seems impossible. There is no greater urgency or calling than this.

In closing, let me personally thank ALF's founder and our shining light, Ann DeBusk, ALF's dynamic, visionary president and CEO Ann Skeet, ALF's dedicated board of directors for making this award possible, and the visionary ALF leaders who continually inspire us all – senior fellows like Becky Morgan, Audrey Rust, Dianne McKenna, Susan Orr, Linda Williams, Blanca Alvarado, Hsing Kung, Michael Chang, and so many more, who, with each of you in this room, are working nonstop to create the new Silicon Valley, a region that will, in our lifetime, promise the lowest rate of poverty, the best schools for all children, thousands of acres of protected open space, no pollution, energy-efficient transportation, successful college and university graduates, a thriving economy, healthy lives and all that we can give and get to make our region the best and most innovative in the country.

Thank you again for this great honor.