



**COUNCILMEMBER
JOSEFINA DUEÑAS**

An update from the desk of Councilmember Josefina Dueñas

Having served as your city councilmember these last two-and-a-half years, I'm constantly reminded of a theme that has stayed with me my entire life: the importance of education. It sounds cliché (especially when coming from a public servant), but it really does determine just about everything. It's the ladder you'll need in life.

We tend to think about education only in terms of school. As an educator, I have seen just how vital school is in our lives—not only from what we learn in classrooms, but also what we gain by interacting with others, working together, and sharing parts of our lives with one another. It's why, as a city, we make a point to invest in our kids' education. We partner with the Ukiah Unified School District, for example, to run the After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program, which provides tutoring, homework assistance, exercise opportunities, and a healthy snack. These kinds of supplemental programs are crucial. As a community, we all want to provide our kids these kinds of nurturing opportunities, and as your city councilmember, I'm committed to protecting and strengthening them.

Education is vital: it is the ladder you need in life.

I would also like us, as a community, to start thinking about education more broadly—as something available to all of us, and as a pathway to greater empathy and understanding. This can mean a lot of things. From my position as councilmember, it means educating you about all the resources at your disposal here in Ukiah, and making myself available to connect you with those.



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Government is intended to serve, and to be held accountable by, you. And in a local city government like ours, there are fewer barriers to entry, and many ways to get involved. I encourage you to explore the possibilities on our city's website, which is a great starting point. But it's only that: a starting point. I want to be an additional resource, someone to whom you can ask questions, someone who can help you get more involved, if you want to.

A little more than a third of our residents are Hispanic or Latino. As your city council member, I proudly represent all of our residents. I'm especially honored to represent our Latino and Tribal populations and use my own background to help build deeper connections between these communities and our government.

I want to use my own background to help build deeper connections between our minority communities and our city government.

Our city has started providing Spanish-language materials in our communications and has generally felt more open and welcoming to our Latino residents. I know this from talking with you all around town, and from your attendance at city council meetings. I'm so glad to see this, and I want your involvement to continue to grow. I'll remain a source of encouragement in that.

Above all, my hope with this update is that, after reading it, you'll feel more comfortable being an active part of our city, whether that means attending our community yard sale, signing up for our recreation classes, or even just talking with me and other city councilmembers when you see us at the farmer's market, church, or somewhere else around town. If we know what's on your mind, we can better represent and serve you.

As humans, we each face internal challenges that persist even if they can't be seen on the outside. I've experienced this as a result of my deafness. It's only through getting to know each other that we can discover the fuller picture, that we become educated about ourselves and others. Acknowledging other peoples' disabilities, struggles, hopes, and goals is crucial. Life is a chance to do whatever we can to help others.

