

Gaining Campaign Know-How

Submitted by the City of Santa Clara

Politics is an American pastime that rivals baseball and apple pie. In every election season candidates vie for public office, with their friends and neighbors as supporters and volunteers. With the upcoming state and municipal elections, this will certainly be the case in 2014.

While many folks are interested in either seeking elected office, or supporting a candidate whom they believe in, many skills are necessary to do so successfully. Fortunately, there are a number of ways to earn these abilities and enfranchise yourself as a political activist.

The most common way to learn the ropes in a political campaign is to volunteer. Most well-organized efforts have a seasoned team that are more than willing to mentor interested volunteers. With the thousands of volunteer hours that go into a winning campaign, from event organizing to walking pre-

incts, they'll be sure to use your time wisely.

Another option is to seek specialized campaign training in a classroom environment. For example, the San Jose Chamber of Commerce occasionally holds one-day workshops to teach campaign tactics and best practices. Training institutes can also be found with Working Partnerships USA, the New Leaders Council and Emerge California, to name a few. And, most political parties have mentoring and training opportunities for active members.

If none of this sounds appealing, but you're still interested in learning about political campaigns, you can search for online resources. YouTube has numerous clips on the topic, some from professional campaign consultants. While these are less interactive, they can provide a decent base of understanding.

Of course, if you're not interested in politics but still want to serve your community, there are a

number of options. You can find a list of City Boards and Commissions on the City's website if you'd like to serve in a formal, but non-elected, capacity. Service groups like the Soroptimist and Rotary Clubs, youth sports leagues and professional associations are always looking for new members. Or, if you'd simply like to be in the loop regarding City news, meetings and events, you can subscribe to eNotify, Santa Clara's email notification system, at santaclaraca.gov/eNotify.

Whatever form it takes, your time and effort being involved in your community are appreciated by your neighbors, your friends and generations to come. So, if you have even an itch to see what's out there, please take the time to volunteer and enjoy the great American pastime of democracy.

For more information, contact the Santa Clara City Clerk's Office at 408-615-2220 or clerk@santaclaraca.gov. Or, sign up for eNotify at santaclaraca.gov/eNotify.