

MARGARET DIXON – December 2017

Dedicating a Lifetime to Oakland Youth and Giving Back to the Community



When Margaret Dixon was growing up in West Oakland, she was the fastest runner on her block. She would organize teams and have all the neighborhood kids race each other in the middle of the street. Decades later she continues to bring together Oakland youth for her 32nd year as volunteer director of the Police Activities League (PAL) Track Club she created for kids ages 5-18.

Besides coaching the kids, the former 25-year Oakland police officer, who has been directing Merritt's Administration of Justice Program for 12 years, helps raise money to send the teams to

competitions all over the world. Still going strong since 1985, the popular Track Club recently brought nearly 100 kids to register for the chance to experience running track for the first time with the assistance of Merritt Coach Brock Drazen.



“As a police officer, I wanted to do something for the community that involved youth and was free, and I had a great deputy chief who let me do whatever I wanted,” she says. “We went around to all the children’s centers attached

to schools in Oakland and read with them and exercised with them and that’s how it all got started. Participating in sports is a great way for kids to build self-esteem and see that if they can excel in sports they can also excel in academics.”



Margaret continues to give her time to support the Oakland youth and along the way has asked and received help from many of Oakland’s movers and shakers, including local sports teams. She is especially thankful to the Warriors

Foundation and the Oakland Raiders who make various donations, including tickets for large groups of students who may otherwise never get to see a game.

It’s also essential for Margaret that her Merritt students know the importance of helping the community and that they participate in events right alongside her. “My students have marched with the mayor, participated in city clean ups, helped the homeless, given out turkeys—and received certificates of



appreciation from the city council for their work, “ she says. “I tell my students that in order to be future police officers, or in other careers in public safety, they need to be invested in the community where they live and work, and giving back is part of it. My students have learned how to give unconditionally, and they love it.”



One of the highlights of Margaret’s volunteer work is hosting PAL’s Annual Christmas Dinner, this year on December 14, at Shiloh Christian Fellowship Church, 3295 School Street. Now in its 28th year, the event brings together hundreds of families for a delicious turkey dinner served by Oakland police officers, city officials, and community volunteers including Merritt students, faculty, and staff (Steve Pantell is a regular).

“It’s a wonderful, fulfilling event every year,” says Margaret, “and I welcome anyone who would like to volunteer their time this year and share the spirit of the holiday and the community.”