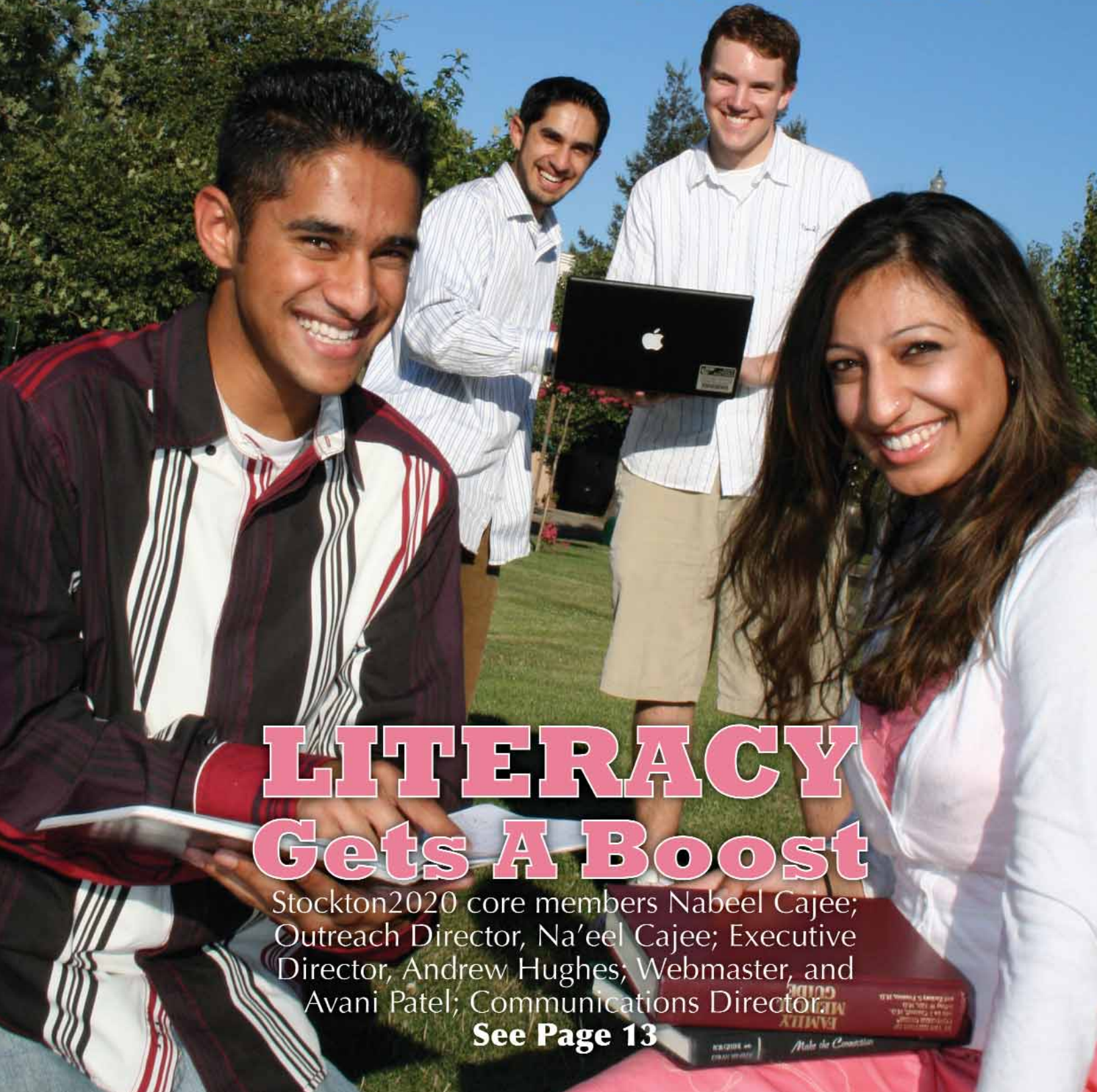


# Brookside

monthly

YOUR COMMUNITY MAGAZINE



## LITERACY Gets A Boost

Stockton2020 core members Nabeel Cajee; Outreach Director, Na'eel Cajee; Executive Director, Andrew Hughes; Webmaster, and Avani Patel; Communications Director

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# Hindsight Is 20/20

Stockton2020 offers a clear vision for a smarter city. Photos and story by Jennifer Silcocks

I have been a Stockton resident for over eight years now. My kids have been in the school system for seven years with my youngest starting preschool very soon. Being a mom, a writer and a concerned community member, I was shocked to hear that Stockton ranked last in literacy out of the seventy largest cities polled in 2006. Literacy is the single most important gift a child, youth or adult can be given to help them fully participate in society.

Literacy is fundamental in being able to function in today's culture. It is a common bond that people of all generations, backgrounds and ethnicities can depend on. Literacy provides us with the power to learn, to imagine and to follow our dreams. It empowers people to pursue their careers and take advantage of the opportunities in our growing economy. It enables us to be healthy, and keep our families healthy. It is the foundation on which knowledge, confidence and personal growth are built. There are serious dangers in the lack of literacy and to stop the avalanche of negativity, we need to do something drastic and creative as a community.

There are new literacy challenges in our changing world, new forms of communication, and expanding use of technology. We live in a fast paced society where we depend on home computers and instant media. Literacy is a cornerstone of lifelong learning. It is essential to understanding and meeting present and future changes and challenges. Changing demands at school, at home, in the work place and in the community require innovative community responses. Communities in Stockton are diverse in culture and language. We need a hands on, "hearts-on" approach to understanding our special needs as a community in whole.

Stockton2020 is definitely a group of young individuals who understand those challenges and have the "heart" to make their vision become a reality. They are the country's first youth-based library advocacy group and they started right here in Brookside. Stockton2020 is one of the most exciting campaigns for literacy in the area. The group of young individuals who make up Stockton2020 are proud of Stockton's heritage and diversity and want Stockton to be known as a vibrant, safe and smart city. Stockton2020's main mission is to "empower the youth in our city to envision and promote a safer, healthier and more prosperous community". Their goal is to make Stockton a "destination rather than a drive-by."

Brookside residents and core members Na'eel Cajee, Avani Patel, Nabeel Cajee and Andrew Hughes launched the "Libraries Change Lives" Campaign in the summer of 2007. Their main mission is to work with city officials to build a state-of-the-art, world class library system in the heart of downtown Stockton. They are an eager, enthusiastic, encouraging group of young entrepreneurs who have a passion for their purpose. They have built up Stockton 2020 to over thirty members to date and it is clear that they will continue to strengthen and accomplish their goals



They understand that literacy in Stockton is a growing crisis. Not only is Stockton America's least literate city, it is also one of America's least creative cities. With crime statistics at the top FBI rankings, the group pointed out that they weren't surprised to discover our libraries rank in the 8th percentile, among the worst in the nation. Don't let those statistics scare you though. Stockton2020 believes that libraries are a proven solution to those problems and that Stockton can overcome these issues with the help of its youth and a revitalized vision. Right now, Stockton is going through a critical period of redevelopment, especially in the downtown area. The need for a higher quality of life, better schools and libraries is essential to bring new business in the area

which in turn, will give incentive for the youth in our city to come back to Stockton after college to build their lives, businesses and communities. It's a win-win situation.

Stockton2020 is trying to spread their word across the city by good old fashioned "grass roots actions." They are going into each neighborhood and are specifically reaching out to our youth so their voices can be heard in our community as a way to promote literacy, as well as a stronger economy, a safer environment, and a smarter city. This group of young visionaries is being listened to. They have presented their ideas in front of city officials with outstanding support and encouragement. They are being heard at public hearings, board meetings, city council meetings, and

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**Stockton2020**

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are being solicited to speak at numerous functions and small businesses as well as having a partnership with the San Joaquin Library, and the Friends of The Public Library. The Friends gave Stockton2020 a seed-grant of \$1,000, marking the first contribution from the Stockton community. Their grass roots efforts are paying off and Stockton can only benefit by their dedication, determination, hard work and effort.

Na'eel Cajee, executive director, founded Stockton2020 after returning from his freshman year at Harvard. A Brookside resident, Lincoln High valedictorian, and former Lincoln Unified trustee, Na'eel attributes his passion for learning and social service to his mother's emphasis on reading and help-

ing others. Na'eel says that it is "time for young Stocktonians to stand up as citizens who cannot and do not use "youth" as an excuse for mediocrity; rather, we want to use it as a compelling reason for the city to listen. Stockton's youth are the best consulting group the city could ever hire."

Avani Patel, communications director and founding member is currently a sophomore majoring in International Relations/Economics at American University in Washington DC. A Lincoln High grad, she comes home to Brookside where her parents reside. In high school, Avani was president of the Troke Teen Advisory Board for four years and she coordinated events and worked to enhance the teen section of the library. Her hope is that by revitalizing the library system in Stockton, the city will

not only survive, but thrive as well. In the same way passers-by can see Seattle's and San Diego's libraries from I-5, Avani wants the Stockton skyline to sport a visionary library so we can join the information superhighway. She says that "the design of a library reflects the vision the community has of itself" and to keep Stockton growing, we need to "prioritize a new library for downtown in order to make resources available for our community members."

Nabeel Cajee, outreach director and founding member of Stockton2020 graduated with honors from Lincoln High School and will attend UC Berkeley next spring. Outside of school, Nabeel, former captain of Lincoln's speech & debate team, co-developed a workshop for vulnerable youth for the city of Stockton's Youth Education and Action Team as well as vol-

unteered as a library tutor. Nabeel's goal as the outreach director is to train presenters, young and wise, to reach out and begin the community conversations about prioritizing Stockton's libraries. He oversees five deputy outreach directors who focus on business, health, education, faith/culture and government. Nabeel says that "a city with extraordinary challenges needs extraordinary solutions. That solution begins with an extraordinary library system." He added mindfully, "Even a brand new cookie-cutter library system won't make the cut."

Andrew Hughes, webmaster for Stockton 2020 will be starting his second year at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo in September. He is majoring in computer engineering and is currently in the Honors Program at Cal Poly. He has

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# yourcommunity

been a Stockton resident since the age of two and has lived in Brookside for many years. Andrew was immersed in the importance of the library from an early age. His mother, Tandy Gotschall, retired as a librarian in 2006 and his sister, Peaches Ehrich, is a librarian at the Cesar Chavez Library in downtown Stockton. Andrew, like his partners, is determined to get the word out about the importance of a revitalized library system to Stockton residents. Andrew wants to reiterate that a state of the art library "is the engine of economic development and not the exhaust." He also pointed to efforts in Elk Grove to hire Zaha Hadid, a world-famous architect, to design a \$160 million civic complex and said, "Its' time to wake up and face the music."

I asked the founding group of Stockton2020 how the community can help them reach their goals. They need young people

to volunteer time and talent. they train people in public speaking, graphic and publication design, film production, community organizing, grant writing. They need the support and endorsement of businesses and patrons to keep Stockton2020 alive and well. Lastly, they need would love to host a Stockton2020 presentation at your organization or business.

Stockton2020 is a non profit group that is just beginning to reach the peak of its potential. They have the best interest of all Stocktonians at heart and I truly believe that one day, we will see a beautiful new, state of the art library on the Stockton city skyline due mostly in part by this innovative group of individuals.

For more information about Stockton2020 and their long term vision for Stockton, please log on to [www.stockton2020.org](http://www.stockton2020.org) or email [contact@stockton2020.org](mailto:contact@stockton2020.org).

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## Restaurant Survey

We Value Your Opinion! Please participate in this Restaurant Survey and you will receive a \$25 Gift Certificate to a Stockton restaurant.

**A.** Please check all restaurants below that you have visited in the past 6 months.

- Dave Wong's \_\_\_\_\_
- Red Lobster \_\_\_\_\_
- Outback \_\_\_\_\_
- De Vega Brothers \_\_\_\_\_
- Black Angus \_\_\_\_\_
- Applebee's \_\_\_\_\_
- Le Bistro \_\_\_\_\_
- El Torito \_\_\_\_\_
- Ernie's On The Brick Walk \_\_\_\_\_
- Papapavlo's \_\_\_\_\_
- 856 \_\_\_\_\_
- Stockton Joe's \_\_\_\_\_
- Old Spaghetti Factory \_\_\_\_\_
- Chili's \_\_\_\_\_
- Macaroni Grill \_\_\_\_\_
- Mallard's \_\_\_\_\_
- Garlic Brothers \_\_\_\_\_
- Wine and Roses \_\_\_\_\_

**B.** One of my favorite restaurants not listed above is:

.....

**C.** In the space to the right of the restaurants you checked above, please rate your top 4 dining experiences. Place a #1 for your best, #2 for second best, #3 for third best and #4 for fourth best.

**D.** What disturbs you most when dining out?

.....

**E.** For a restaurant to be my favorite they need to:

.....

**F.** In the past 6 months have you used the following to choose a local restaurant:

- Yellow Pages  Yes  No
- The Internet  Yes  No
- The Record Newspaper  Yes  No

**G.** I am:  
 Male  Female

**H.** I have lived in the Stockton area:

- Less than 2 years
- 2-10 years
- 10-20 years
- More than 20 years

**I.** My age is:

- Under 25 years old
- 25-39 years old
- 40-49 years old
- 50-59 years old
- Over 60 years old

## Thank You For Your Participation!

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