86-year old Dave Wolfe of Cupertino and 19 year-old Yolanda Arroyo of East San Jose found they had more in common than either of them ever imagined when they literally ran into each other during a Lifetime Fitness Class at De Anza College. Both tried to step onto a treadmill and in the ensuing laughter mentioned how awesome the facilities at De Anza are. “I told him this class was great, but math was really getting me down,” Yolanda said. Dave immediately invites her to come and see him in the Mentoring & Student Center, where his background as an engineering with Lockheed promoted in to volunteer to tutor math at the college. In fact, Dave got his A.A. at De Anza before he transferred to Stanford University and when he retired decided to go back to De Anza just for enrichment.

Thus a new but not unique for De Anza partnership was born: Pairing life-long learners with struggling students resulting in a 95% retention rate for the college’s students.

“Yolanda wants to be a teacher”, Dave said. “She’s bright and energetic and she makes sure I’m in the Mentoring Center when she needs help.”

This pairing scheme is the result of years of focus group study by the college to find out what students from both communities needs; and how those needs could be integrated for both.

Yolanda and Dave have also decided to take a class in Urdu, and vow to maintain their student/mentor partnership when Yolanda transfers to Stanford.