

## **LAWYERS TRY TO ATTRACT MINORITIES**

### **GROUP PROMOTES PROFESSION TO TEENS**

**EDWIN GARCIA, Mercury News** - August 19, 2005

During her visit Thursday to the San Francisco 49ers headquarters in Santa Clara, giddy 16-year-old Chrystal Sheard, among a group of teenagers, shuttled from player to sweaty player seeking autographs.

But the biggest star Sheard spent the most time with wasn't an athlete -- it was a smaller-than-a-football-player-size man in a red-collared shirt named Ed Goines, the team attorney.

Goines, 39, is the only African-American to head any team's legal department in the National Football League. Chrystal, who also is black, was one of 21 teenagers from the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula invited by a group of Bay Area lawyers trying to boost the number of minorities in the legal profession.

#### **Perks of job**

Goines did his best to sell the attraction of his job to the attentive teens: He gets to travel with the team, hangs out with famous players and negotiates contracts with important sponsors. Every once in a while he even gets "to drive a Hummer."

Chrystal was impressed with his duties, and the perks attached to being the Niners' general counsel and vice president. Can the junior at Sequoia High School in Redwood City, who wants to be a paramedic, picture herself studying law? "That's something I think I'll look into."

And that's exactly what the California Minority Counsel Program wants, said James Potter, general counsel of Del Monte Foods in San Francisco. Started 15 years ago, the San Francisco-based program aims to diversify the legal field and to develop more legal work for attorneys of color.

Potter, who is African-American, said the attorney population should match the new demographics of California, which is a "majority-minority" state. Lawyers, he said, need to accurately reflect who sits in the jury box, as well as the customer base of large corporations.

#### **More representation**

Program officials are exposing students as early as sixth grade to legal careers, a field in which only 5.6 percent of Fortune 500 legal departments

are headed by members of minority groups, according to the Minority Corporate Counsel Association.

"For the kids, the big draw here is the football players," acknowledged program attorney Glen Umeda, who arranged for the teenagers to see the 49ers and to hear a pep talk from Goines. "We wanted a combination of something entertaining and educational."

The teens, members of minority groups mostly from East Palo Alto, Menlo Park and Redwood City, watched the team's daily practice, then participated in drills led by front-office employees. They also asked for autographs for their notebooks, footballs and shirts.

After getting the signature of guard Thomas Herrion, Takara Burse, 11, put him on her cell phone to greet her mother. "I've always wanted to see the Niners," Takara said. "Here it is, my dream come true."

Some of the teens didn't know they were there to meet Goines until the end of their visit, when he addressed them under a white canopy.

He encouraged them to set goals, be persistent, and meet with workers in careers they find interesting.

He also talked about the team's embarrassing record last year: 2 wins, 14 losses. "You ask anybody here why we lost so many games, they'll say it's because we didn't have discipline and structure," Goines said. "That's the same parallel for your lives."

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