



A supplement from the ...

Palm Springs Unified School District

Serving Cathedral City, Desert Hot Springs, Palm Desert, Palm Springs, Rancho Mirage & Thousand Palms — August/September 2010

Improvements in All Core Subject Areas

District Shows Gains in California Standards Test

There is good news for Palm Springs Unified School District this year regarding the 2010 California Standards Tests (CSTs.)

There was an increase in the number of students who scored proficient and above on the CSTs at the District level in all four core subject areas. At the elementary level for English Language Arts, 2nd and 4th grades maintained their same levels of proficiency, while 3rd grade experienced a slight dip. However, 5th grade saw an increase of six percent over last school year, moving from 44 to 50 percent. The largest gains in English Language Arts at the secondary level were made in grades 8 and 10. The percent of students scoring Proficient or Advanced at the 8th grade level rose from 38 to 44 percent while the 10th graders experienced a gain of 5 percent.

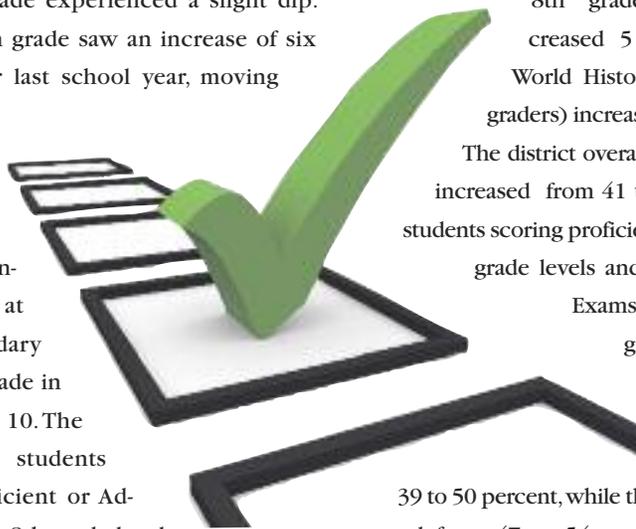
In Mathematics, the District overall percentage increased 3 percent from 38 to 41 percent proficient. The 4th - 7th graders experienced appreciable gains each year over the past four years. This year alone, the 6th graders increased their proficiency rate by 5 percent while the 5th graders saw a growth of 9 percent. The 4th graders grew 4 percent in proficiency, topping the charts at 67 percent, our highest proficiency rate to date.

For the End of Course Exams in Mathematics, our largest gains were on the General Math CST, most often taken by 8th graders. Their proficiency rate increased by 8 percent, from 23 to 31 percent. Both Algebra I and Algebra II experienced a 4 percent growth. All math courses experienced gains over the past four years.

In Social Science, the District's overall percentage increased from 29 to 32 percent. The 8th grade students increased 5 percent, while World History (mostly 10th graders) increased by 4 percent. The district overall Science results increased from 41 to 43 percent of students scoring proficient and above. All grade levels and End of Course

Exams experienced gains. The 5th graders had an 11 percent gain, from 39 to 50 percent, while the 8th graders increased from 47 to 54 percent. The 10th graders saw a 6 percent increase. Earth Science rose by 2 percent, Biology and Chemistry by 5 percent each, and Physics rose 37 percent, from 27 to 64 percent (with 55 students taking the Physics end-of-course exam.)

Preliminary Academic Performance Index (API) results show 15 district schools increased their API over the previous year, and the District's API rose from 720 to 733. Six PSUSD elementary schools reached the state target of 800 or better on the API. Over the past four years, PSUSD's API has increased 69 points with four schools increasing their API by over 100 points.



Traditional Year Starts August 30

Palm Springs Unified School District opens the 2010-11 traditional school year on Monday, August 30. All students are expected to report to classes on that day.

Bus schedules and bell schedules for each school are posted on the District's website at www.psusd.us.

Parents are urged to fill out an application for free and reduced lunch when received at the start of the school year. PSUSD gets federal funds based upon the number of students who qualify for the program, regardless of whether they choose to use the services.

Parents can also receive a ParentConnect sign-on to track their student's assignments and grades. (Training is also available.) For more information, contact your individual school site. For ParentConnect information, call 760-416-6151.



New Administrators are Named

Two Palm Springs Unified assistant principals were promoted to principals for the 2010-11 school year.

Pamela Horton, who served as assistant principal at Sunny Sands Elementary for the past two years, is now the principal of that school following the retirement of Karen Cornett. Horton previously served as assistant principal at Landau Elementary for two years after teaching at that school since 1997.

Blanca Luna, who had served as assistant principal of Edward Wenzlaff Elementary for three years, is now principal at Landau Elementary following the retirement of Lynne Keating. Luna joined Palm Springs Unified as a bilingual aide in 1996 and then became an elementary teacher in 2000.

Several assistant principals have been named over the summer. **Wendy Wangerin**, who has served as an elementary assistant prin-

cipal at Julius Corsini and Two Bunch Palms Elementary schools, is now an assistant principal at Desert Springs Middle School.

Also joining the Desert Springs administrative team as an assistant principal is **Michael Grainger**, who taught algebra for two years at Nellie Coffman Middle School before serving as a math coach at that school for two years.

Debbie Paneris has been named assistant principal at Sunny Sands Elementary. Paneris previously served as assistant principal at Bubbling Wells Elementary, served as a District English Language Learner (ELL) specialist for two years and taught at the elementary level.

James Feffer, who has taught at Della S. Lindley and Cabot Yerxa Elementary schools, has been named assistant principal at Two Bunch Palms Elementary.

(Cont'd on page 4)



HONORING 'BULLDOGS': PSUSD's Student Attendance Review Board (SARB) recently presented its annual "Bulldog Award" to the district's Community Liaison Team for the work they have done supporting families in school attendance this past year. Pictured are community aides, front row, left to right Rosalba Aguilera and Karla Inzunza; back row, left to right, Eva De Leon, Lorena Castaneda, Nancy Wadell, Roberta Viazcan, Shirley Guzman, Lillian Torres and Andrew Alaniz. Also pictured is Student Assistance Program Coordinator Mike Wong, who oversees SARB. An Honorary Bulldog Award was presented to retiring Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Personnel Services Dr. Craig Borba, a member of the state SARB, for his continuous support, mentoring and guidance of the SARB's procedures and practices. During the 2009-10 school year, 599 students were referred to the District Attorney for a large group mediation with 306 of those students returning to regular attendance following that meeting. A total of 293 students went through the formal SARB process, and 35 students were referred to DA Family mediation with five students prosecuted in juvenile court. Overall, attendance improved by 94.2 percent, based on the numbers of students who attained an 85 percent or better attendance rate during the 3-month monitoring period following a SARB intervention.



ADVERTISING FEDERATION SUPPORTS ADHSHS PROGRAM: The American Advertising Federation-Palm Springs/Desert Cities recently presented \$10,000 to Desert Hot Springs High School to assist with a career readiness and marketing project. Funds will be used to purchase computer equipment, career/job success DVDs, and fund a student internship. Pictured above, from left, Ad Fed Scholarship Committee Chair Student Weiner and Ad Fed President Tim O'Bayley, present check to Desert Hot Springs High Digital Arts Teacher Greg Andrade and Desert Hot Springs High Career Center Specialist Sue Emery.

District Receives Foundation Grants

Programs Aided Include Counseling, Band, Math, Technology

Thirteen PSUSD programs are receiving a total of nearly \$145,000 in grant funds from the Irene W. and Guy L. Anderson Children's Foundation for the 2010-11 year. The awards are part of an overall \$900,673 the Foundation will award to 57 local non-profits this year after receiving \$4 million in requests from 157 applicants. The District grants are: \$10,000 for counseling services to: Sunny Sands, Cielo Vista Charter, Rio Vista, Rancho Mirage, Two Bunch Palms and Vista del Monte Elementary Schools...Ramon Alternative Center will receive a \$25,000 grant for counseling services...Grants for band instruments are being awarded to Cathedral City High Band and Color Guard (\$9,901) and Palm Springs High Instrumental Music Boosters (\$15,000)...The Ramon Alternative Center will receive \$22,754 for a runner's fitness program...Desert Hot Springs High School will receive \$13,154 for a Ham Radio Emergency Response Career Explorations program...Palm Springs High School's AVID program will receive \$4,800 for college field trips...Raymond Cree Middle School will receive a grant of \$2,450 for a math support program and \$2,109 for the development of a school garden.

District

FOUNDATION PRESENTS GRANT CHECK: The Pinnacle Fund, PSUSD's Foundation, recently awarded \$2,615.00 to Louisa Castrodale, PSUSD Visual & Performing Arts Specialist, at a District Board Meeting, to fund student transportation for fine arts programs. The presentation was made by Dennis Curran, Pinnacle Fund president. The award was for the organization's spring Art & Wine Tasting event at the Palm Springs Art Museum, which was part of the Fund's recent initiative "Get on the Bus" to provide student transportation costs for art enrichment. To learn more about The Pinnacle Fund or how to support its efforts call 760.416.6118 or visit www.pinnaclefund.org.



HISTORY COMES ALIVE AT CCE:

Martha McDevitt's Fifth Grade class presented its annual "Living History Museum" in June culminating over three months of research and preparation. Students read a biography of a famous American, wrote a speech in the first person about the character's life story, donned a costume

representing the character, and painted a background depicting an event from the character's life. The entire student body as well as members of the community had the opportunity to tour the "museum" and watch to the presenters tell their stories.



FIRE SAFETY TRAILER TO VISIT SCHOOLS: The Palm Springs Fire Department has been

working with community partners for two years to secure funding to purchase a new Fire Safety Education Trailer. As a result, a total of \$70,700 was donated or committed, including \$10,000 from PSUSD through a federal safety grant and \$700 from the Cielo Vista Elementary Parent Teacher Group. The trailer, which teaches students how to respond to fire, smoke and earthquakes, will visit Palm Springs elementary schools and will expand into Cathedral City later this year. Pictured, from left, Palm Springs Deputy Fire Marshals Ricke Warstler, Ron Beverly, and Cameron Robbins; and Fire Chief Blake Goetz.

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Digest

DIGICOM WINNERS: Bubbling Wells Teacher Anita Williams, back row, right, and several of her 5th Grade students were recently honored by the Desert Hot Springs City Council as part of the city's "Treasures of Desert Hot Springs," program for her class's winning video in the 2010 PSUSD DigiCom Video Festival. The video, entitled "Mission Creek Preserve," received the Time Warner Cable Award for the theme of the 2010 DigiCom "Healthy Planet, Healthy People." Also pictured are, from left, Bubbling Wells Principal Dr. Steve Marlatt, Mayor Yvonne Parks and several of the Bubbling Wells students, representing their class. Students and teachers were also busy before schools closed in June getting started on their entries for the 2011 festival themed "Making A Difference."



FOUNDATION FUNDS LAPTOP PROGRAM AT WENZLAFF: The 55 students in the combined third through fifth grade Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) class are receiving Dell Latitude laptop computers this year thanks to a \$60,000 grant from the H.N. and Frances C. Berger Foundation to launch the schools' "21st Century Learning Demonstration Project," unveiled at a "roll out commemoration" last spring attended by students in the class and their parents, city elected officials and members of the Berger and Pinnacle Fund Foundation (which administered the grant). Pictured above at the ceremony are, from left, rear, Supt. of Schools Dr. Lorri McCune, Board of Education President Shari Stewart, Berger Foundation Senior Program Officer Catharine Reed and Vice President Chris McGuire. The laptop recipients are, from left, bottom, Stephanie Vargas, Emily Tan, Amber Stella, and Kevin Segrist.

of Education

Richard Clapp
Clerk

andron Meredy Shoenberger

Administration

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District report to the community
Desert Hot Springs Unified School District.
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TITLE I ACHIEVERS:

Katherine Finchy and Sunny Sands Elementary Schools were among the schools named Title I Achieving Schools by the California Department of Education for 2010. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell, standing, center, honored representatives from the named schools at an April ceremony in Anaheim. Pictured with O'Connell are, seated, left to right, retired Sunny Sands Principal Karen Cornett, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services Dr. Christine Anderson and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Lorri McCune; standing, from left, Sunny Sands Site Coordinator Susan Hurst, Katherine Finchy teacher Sacha Khanbegan and Finchy Principal Mark Arnold.



DHSHS RETAINS SUPERINTENDENT'S TROPHY: The Marine Corp JROTC at Desert Hot Springs High School once again placed first in the "Pass 'N Review" drill exercises and parade competition among the district's three high school JROTC units, held at Palm Springs High last spring. Pictured above, Supt. of Schools Dr. Lorri McCune, left, presents the trophy to Cadet Brittney Castro.

DISTINGUISHED SCHOOLS: The principals of Sunny Sands, Landau and Cielo Vista Elementary Schools were honored by their city's mayor and city council recently, following the school's selection as California Distinguished Schools for 2010. At right, Cathedral City Mayor K a t h y D e R o s a,



center, honors Retiring Sunny Sands Principal Karen Cornett, left, and retiring Landau Principal Lynne Keating. At left, members of the Palm Springs City Council, from left, rear, Councilmen Chris Mills, Mayor Protem Rick Hutcheson, Councilman Lee Weigel and Mayor Steve Pougnet, and bottom right, Councilwoman Ginny Foat, honor Cielo Vista Principal Lynda Lake.

EAGLE MOSAIC ADORNS DHSHS: PSUSD's Arts Specialist Louisa Castrodale coordinated an artist-in-residency project between Nedra Young of Social Mosaics, and Desert Hot Springs High School, which was funded by a partnership grant from The Pinnacle Fund. Working with Ms. Taun-Yo Jones and 12 talented junior and senior students, the mosaic was designed and created in April and May of this year. It now resides permanently on the southeast corner of the campus (Cholla at Pierson.) The City of Desert Hot Springs generously provided the installation of the piece. Artists, from left, Josue Hernandez, Gustavo Davila (white jacket), Andrew Murillo, Victor Franco, Chris Valenzuela, Shanti Almanza, Lupe Villanueva, Casey Kraychir, Stacy Gallegos and Sabrina Martinez, at the unveiling with Pinnacle Fund Board Members standing, from left, Kathleen Jurasky, Marge Cook and Pam Erwin and Desert Hot Springs Mayor Yvonne Parks, right.



'Change' Award Given to Corsini Elementary

School Among Just Six in Nation Chosen

Julius Corsini Elementary School was one of only six schools in the nation to recently receive the 11th Annual Panasonic National School Change Award. Each winning school received a \$5,000 grant, national recognition and media coverage. Principal Kiela Bonelli attended the 13th Annual National Principals Leadership Institute in New York City where she received the award from the US Department of Education and participated in a major national research project on school change.

At a June presentation at the school, Lew Smith, director of the National Principals Leadership Institute and Panasonic National School Change Awards, noted that the award is "not for good schools" but for "a good school that wasn't always that way." Ceremony attendees, which included the entire school via closed-circuit television, some parents, school admin-

istrators, elected representatives and community members, were moved by a parody of "We Are the World" called "It's Time to Strive." It was per-

formed by a representative group of students and written by Corsini teacher Cheryl Buck and her husband Jeff Mattson with assistance from teachers Kim Moniz and Charlotte Silver.

Criteria for the award focuses on how meaningful the change in the school has been, how broad, deep and systematic the change has been; how focused it has been; and how it was measured. All of the Corsini teachers have applied for National Board Certification in Teaching. In the past two years, seven teachers have achieved the national certification, and



At a Julius Corsini awards ceremony, National School Change Awards Director Lew Smith demonstrates the school's success in "raising the bar" and creating positive change.

more than 10 more teachers are within a few points of attaining the status.

More than 700 schools from 44 states have been nominated for the Panasonic National School Change Award in the past 10 years with just six chosen each year. From the 60 to 100 applications received each year, a screening committee chooses 24 finalists, prior to a national panel of judges selecting the six winning school which this year included schools in North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Maryland.

Administrators Announced

(Cont'd from page 1)

Other administrative changes for the 2010-11 school year include:

Dr. Anne Kalisek, former principal of Alternative Education is now principal at Desert Hot Springs High, and former DHSHS Principal Dr. Milt Jones is now principal of Alternative Education.

Dr. Mike Swize, who has been the District's Director of English Learners for the past four years, is now also serving as Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction.

Vice Principals **Todd Diliberto** and **Karen Ghulam** move from Desert Hot Springs High to Cathedral City High, Vice Principal **Brad Bryeans** moves from Cathedral City High to Ramon Alternative Center and Vice Principal **Art Sanchez** moves from Cathedral City High to Desert Hot Springs High. Mount San Jacinto Vice Principal **Tracy Piper** moves to Desert Hot Springs High.

Message from the Superintendent

Fewer Resources Will Not Stop District Progress

Despite the bleak economic picture - which is not expected to improve soon - our staff and students continue to rise to the challenge. Preliminary results on our spring California Standards Tests (*see story on page 1*) show that a large majority of our schools are continuing to improve. Our Board of Education and administration are proud of our teachers, support staff, students, and parents' progress toward our common goal of academic success for each of our nearly 25,000 students. This collaboration is vital now more than ever, and we appreciate the effort and "can do" attitude of everyone.

The state budget is supposed to be approved by the legislature and signed by the Governor by July 1 of each year. Very rarely

does this happen, and often a budget is not adopted until months later.

Regardless of when the state passes a budget, school districts are required to have their budget in place by June 30 of each year. Palm Springs Unified has its budget in place based upon the Governor's proposed budget as of May of this year. We have heard that Governor Schwarzenegger may not approve this year's budget at all, that he may leave that task to the new Governor after the November election. This makes it especially difficult since a good portion of the



school year is over by then. We hope that the finally approved budget is not less the proposed budget as personnel cuts are not possible for many employees who are hired for the year.

As you're probably aware, PSUSD, along with every other school district in California, has had to make substantial reductions to our budget due to the state budget forecast and economic crisis in our state. Our fiscal conservancy in the past several years made it possible to use some reserve funds to make up a portion of our \$8 million deficit for this year. However, we were forced to make significant cuts which necessitated layoffs both in the certificated and classified ranks. Class size in grades 1-3 increased, transportation to school

was reduced, several positions were unfilled or eliminated and implementation of the most current English Language Arts was delayed. Even with all of these cuts, we are still in a deficit situation and see the likelihood that we will make additional reductions of at least \$2 million in ongoing costs next year.

We will continue to weather the economic storm, and I have no doubt, continue to move forward and see our students thrive. Thank you for your past, present and future support of our children.

Lorri S. McCune, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools