



A supplement from the ...

# Palm Springs Unified School District

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

## Dept. of Education Recognizes Schools for Education Gains

Katherine Finchy and Sunny Sands Elementary Schools are among 238 California schools selected for the 2009-10 Title I Academic Achievement Award.

The Award is given only to schools receiving federal funding through the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. To receive the award, the schools must demonstrate that all students are making significant progress toward proficiency on state academic content standards. Also, the school's socioeconomically disadvantaged students must have doubled the achievement targets set for them for two consecutive years.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell called Finchy Principal Mark Arnold and Sunny Sands Principal Karen Cornett to give them the news and express his personal congratulations and gratitude. The schools will be honored at a reception and banquet at the Disneyland Hotel on April 21.

## PSUSD Principal and English Language Director are Feted

Two Palm Springs Unified School District administrators have been chosen as Administrators of the Year for Region XIX Association of California School Administrators (ACSA). They are now in the running for state Administrator of the Year in their respective categories. State winners will be announced in May.



Bonelli

J u l i u s Corsini Elementary Principal Dr. Kiela Bonelli was named Elementary Principal of the Year.

Director of English Language Learners Dr. Mike Swize was chosen as Central Office Administrator of the Year.



Swize

Both administrators were nominated by the Palm Springs Leadership Association ACSA chapter, formed two years ago. It is comprised of PSUSD managers and directors. Bonelli and Swize will be honored at an ACSA Region XIX dinner in Riverside next month.

## Citizens' Group Issues Report

### Special Oversight Committee Views District Projects

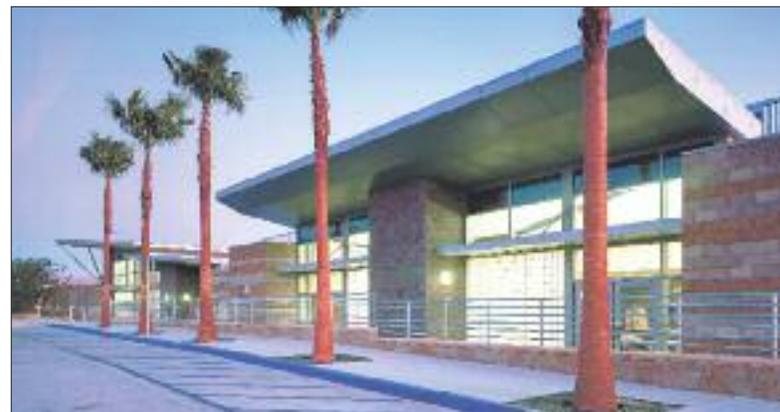
The Palm Springs Unified School District's Citizens' Oversight Committee (COC) has published its annual report outlining construction projects under way and planned as part of two bond measures passed by District voters in 2004 and 2008.

The COC, formed prior to the start of projects slated under the 2004 Measure T bond, reviews all expenditures of the \$122 million Measure T and \$516 million Measure E to ensure funds spent conform to the ballot measures.

The report is available through a Citizens' Oversight Committee link on PSUSD's website at [www.psusd.us](http://www.psusd.us). Hard copies are available at city halls, libraries, chambers of commerce and at the PSUSD District Office at 980 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs.

The nine-member COC is comprised of individuals representing various District constituencies. Current members include: Donald Aikens, Alice Broich, Joseph Glowitz, Phillip Huebner, Steve Pougnet, Greg Rodriguez, Drew Sweatte and Kevin Towner.

In compliance with the requirements of Proposition 39, PSUSD engaged an independent CPA firm to perform an audit of the financial records of the bond program, a copy of which is available on PSUSD's website. The auditors noted that all items paid from the general obligation funds comply with the purpose of the bond approved by voters.



Construction of PSUSD's newest school, Cabot Yerxa Elementary in Desert Hot Springs, was completed in time for the school to open this year.

## Variety of Projects in Report

**PAINTED HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL** in Desert Hot Springs on the corner of Sonora and Avenida Jalisco Drive is slated for completion by January 2011.

**NEW COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL** in Rancho Mirage will begin construction this spring.

**TWO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN DESERT HOT SPRINGS** (one near Interstate 62, north of Pierson and one adjacent to Painted Hills Middle) will be constructed when enrollments near the school properties are sufficient, and bond funds are available at a later date.

**THE DISTRICT'S NEW SERVICE CENTER** will begin construction this spring off of Gene Autry between the Home Depot and Escena Golf course in Palm Springs. The District's lease on its existing service yard expires in June 2010, and the new facility should be complete in August 2011.

**PALM SPRINGS HIGH BAND ROOM** will be moved and re-designed to accommodate the growing number of students in the program. Construction is expected to begin next fall if sufficient funds are available.

**DISTRICT-WIDE PLAYGROUND UPGRADES** including the latest in safe, molded high density plastic play structures, rubberized play surface and age-appropriate equipment designed for physical activities, will be installed at district schools in four phases beginning in June.

**RENOVATION OF KITCHENS** will be completed on campuses as identified by a recent kitchen assessment so that all are in compliance with County Health Department requirements.

For more information on the report or COC, call 760-416-6126.

# District



**G**OVERNOR'S FITNESS CHALLENGE REGIONAL WINNERS: The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Executive Director Kenny Rogers, recently recognized Agua Caliente Elementary School as the winner of the 2009 Governor's Challenge Competition for the Desert Sierra region. He presented the school with a \$5,000 check for physical fitness equipment and a \$1,000 gift card for school supplies at CVS/pharmacy. The school's students were also visited by the "Live Like A Champion

Tour," which provided them the opportunity to participate in interactive games and challenging sports-themed activities. Pictured with the student representatives who accepted the check are, from left, AC Administrative Secretary Rebecca Hernandez; Governor's Fitness Challenge Site Coordinator Paula Reynolds; Board of Education Clerk Richard Clapp; Superintendent of Schools Dr. Lorri McCune; Principal Lucy Medina; Rogers; and Board of Education member Gary Jeandron. PSUSD schools are currently participating in this year's Governor's Fitness Challenge. There is also a competition among valley cities called the Desert Fitness Challenge. To sign-up for the challenge with your favorite school, visit [www.calgovcouncil.org](http://www.calgovcouncil.org).



**T**ECH HEROES: Five Rio Vista Elementary teachers were recently honored as Tech Heroes and received 10 computers each for their classrooms from the Technology Training Foundation of America (TTFA). For nine years, Time Warner Cable and Southern California Edison have joined TTFA to distribute hundreds of high-quality refurbished computers to schools in Southern California. Four other valley teachers were also honored as Tech Heroes at the Rio Vista ceremony. Honored Rio Vista teachers, with plaques left to right, were Shellie Herndon, Joel Bible, Sabrina Molhoek, Guy Haberman, and Angela Sugg. Pictured with the awardees are, from left, Kathleen DeRosa, Southern California Edison; Elli Tourje and Kathy Jacobs, Time Warner Cable; Rio Vista Principal Mike Long; TTFA President Jeanette Roche, and Tiffany Lynch, Time Warner Cable.



**S**AM'S CLUB HELPS TEACHERS: Sam's Club in Palm Desert's Marketing Representative Claudia Rodriguez, left, recently presented 10 Della S. Lindley Elementary teachers (chosen by random drawing)

with \$100 gift cards to purchase school supplies. Pictured above, with Principal Simone Kovats, third from left, are recipients, from left, Tammy Riddle, Maria Escobedo, Brenda Ragland, Judy Urrutia, Susan Gardner and Candy Benitez. Winners not pictured included Michael Lally, Connie Leon and Maricela Lupercio.

**F**ILM FEST FINALE: The Palm Springs High Jazz Band was invited to be part of the Palm Springs International Film Festival's Closing Gala entertainment. Pictured above at the finale with the band members are, from left, Director of Bands Brian Ingelson, actress Blythe Danner and PS Jazz Band vocalist Marilyn Wexler.



**B**EE CHAMPS: PSUSD recently had its Bee of Champions contest among the top two spellers at each District elementary and middle school. Raymond Cree student Julius Beronio,

right, took first and will represent PSUSD at the county spelling bee next month. Jennifer Rodrigues of Raymond Cree, left, was second and will be alternate.

**O**RION WINNERS: Cathedral City Elementary teacher Duane Nascimiento, left, won the Educator of the Year Award from the Cathedral City Chamber of Commerce at their annual Orion Awards. Cathedral City High Senior Edgar Gonzalez, right, received the chamber's Youth of the Year Orion honor which includes a \$500 college scholarship.



## PSUSD Board

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Justin Blake

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Craig Borba, Ed. D., Assistant Superintendent

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# t Digest



**DAY MADE BETTER' FOR TWO DISTRICT TEACHERS:** Vista del Monte Elementary teacher Kim McClinton and Agua Caliente Ele-

mentary teacher Amanda Gonzales were recently surprised by representatives for the Palm Springs and Cathedral City OfficeMax stores, respectively, when they came and presented each of them with \$1,000 of classroom materials including paper, a printer, digital camera, white board and more. Pictured above McClinton is congratulated by Office Max staff members Shawn Neale, left, Cynthia Delacruz, second to right, and Brisa Silva, right; Office Max Assistant Manager Carlos Bazn, left, and Vista del Monte Principal Joe Scudder, second from left.

**STUDENTS SHADOW ROTARIANS:** Members of the Palm Springs Noon Rotary club hosted 19 Palm Springs High students at the club's recent annual Job Shadow Day. Pictured above, Palm Springs High senior Paul Hulbert, left, who also interns at Desert Regional Medical Center in the Supplies, Procurement and Distribution department, talks about his experience shadowing Jim Dunn, executive director of the Palm Springs Convention Center. Pictured with Hulbert is John Glenn, of the Mentor Group, who organized the event with the Rotarians.



**ATHENA HONOREES:** Palm Springs High School Partners In Education (PIE) Coordinator Fern Rudd, left, was one of four local women recently honored by the Palm Springs Chamber of Commerce with an Athena Award for service to the community. In addition to the Athena Awards, the Chamber also awarded scholarships to Palm Springs High School seniors, from left, Cristalle Bombon, Christina Kim and Daniela Salazar.



**GIFT FROM THE HEART:** When the Raymond Cree Choir students heard about the New Year's day fire that killed the family of one of their members, they wanted to do whatever they could to help. They unanimously decided that rather than put their efforts into fund-raising for their annual trip to Knott's Berry Farm to participate in a spring music festival, all of the funds raised this school year (as well as through an annual benefit concert for the next four years) would go into a scholarship fund for classmate, Ciria Silva. When the marketing director of Knott's Berry Farm heard about this gift, she contacted Choir Director Andy Eisenmann and told him that Knott's would be giving free tickets to all 130 choir members. Local bus charter company, Cardiff Limousines, also donated two large coaches to provide transportation for the students. To date, about \$3,500 has been donated to Ciria's scholarship fund. To make a donation, make checks payable to RCMS VMB fbo Ciria Silva and send to RCMS Vocal Music Boosters at RCMS, 1011 Vista Chino Drive, Palm Springs, 92262.

**EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDING:** PSUSD's Palm Springs Leadership Association (PSLA) launched its first "Every Student Succeeding" program in January, honoring one student from each of the District's 26 schools who has overcome a significant challenge to make academic and/or behavioral progress. The students were nominated by a classroom teacher or principal. A PSLA subcommittee chose one of the honorees to represent PSUSD in the ACSA Region XIX Every Student Succeeding competition. Che Thi (Jennifer) Nguyen, center, who is dual enrolled at Julius Corsini Elementary and Desert Springs Middle School is the District's Region XIX nominee. Congratulating her are PSLA President-Elect Mike Long and PSLA President Dr. Anne Kalisek. It is unclear how old Jennifer was when she enrolled at Julius Corsini Elementary in April 2008. It is estimated that she was between 10-14 years old. Originally from Vietnam, she lived on the street and then an orphanage for the first 12 years of her life. Over the past two years, she has worked hard learning English without home language support while concurrently adapting to a new culture and climate. Despite these challenges, Jennifer has improved dramatically—both academically and socially. She is working towards her goals of being at her proper grade level by the end of this school year and attending Desert Springs full time next fall.



## of Education

Richard Clapp  
Clerk

andron Meredy Shoenberger

## Administration

D., Superintendent  
Superintendent, Educational Services  
Superintendent, Human Resources  
Superintendent, Pupil Personnel Services  
Superintendent, Business Services

District report to the community  
Palm Springs Unified School District.  
Palm Springs, CA 92262 • Editor: Joan L. Boiko  
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# Top Staffers are Named

Palm Springs Unified has named six top staff members of the year, including two who are finalists for county honors in their respective job classifications.

**Cabot Yerxa Elementary Principal Mike Grein** was chosen as the District's Principal of the Year. Grein opened the new Desert Hot Springs school in August and previously served as principal of Della S. Lindley Elementary in Thousand Palms and assistant principal at Landau Elementary in Cathedral City and Desert Hot Springs High School. He joined Palm Springs Unified as a physical education teacher at Landau in 1996.

**Tracy Piper, assistant principal of Mount San Jacinto High School**, was chosen as Certificated Administrator of the Year. Piper previously served as assistant principal at the Ramon and Desert Hot Springs Alternative Centers. She

began her career in education as a middle and high school math teacher.

**Roy Hill, manager of security and disaster preparedness**, was named Classified Administrator of the Year and is a finalist for the county honor in that category. Hill has been with Palm Springs Unified since 2005 and is a former Desert Hot Springs police chief.

**Vivian Lopez, senior administrative assistant for educational services**, was named Confidential Staff Member of the Year. Lopez joined the District in 1993 as a substitute office clerk and then served as a senior clerk and senior secretary before taking on her current post in 2002.

**Gisella Garza, special education administrative secretary**, was chosen the Classified Staff Member of the Year. She joined PSUSD in 1998 as a bilingual aide at Agua Caliente and then



**PSUSD's Educators of the Year are (l-r) Security and Disaster Preparedness Manager Roy Hill, Senior Administrative Assistant Vivian Lopez, Mount San Jacinto High Assistant Principal Tracy Piper, Cabot Yerxa Elementary Principal Mike Grein, Administrative Secretary Gisella Garza and Instructional Technology Specialist Lee Grafton.**

served as an intermediate clerk in Pupil Personnel Services and Early Childhood Education.

**Lee Grafton, instructional technology specialist**, was named Site Support Staff Member of the Year and is a finalist for the county award in her category. Grafton joined Palm Springs Unified in 1997.

The employees of the year were chosen by a committee of last year's District winners from nominations submitted by District staff members. County winners will be announced in March, and winners will be recognized at a luncheon in Riverside in May.

## Message from the Superintendent

# District Facing \$8 million Shortfall for 2010-11

As you are probably aware, the Governor released his proposed State Budget for 2010/2011 about three weeks ago. While there will be no mid-year cuts for 2009/2010, there is a negative Cost of Living Adjustment of .38 percent and a proposed \$199 per student reduction in the Revenue Limit for 2010/2011. These two reductions equate to approximately \$5 million less of annual funding for Palm Springs Unified School District.

Over the past 16 months, the District experienced a 15 percent cut in its Revenue Limit. In September 2008/2009, the per pupil funding was \$5,805. It is currently almost \$500 less per student (\$5,215), and the proposal will drop it further to \$4,970. The General Fund budget decreased from \$133.5 million in 2008/2009 to a current \$119 million and a proposed \$114 million for 2010/2011. This is a loss of almost \$20 million in less than a year and a half!

We started on a road of strict fiscal conservancy much earlier than some other districts across the state. We froze non-essential spending, re-allocated categorical funds to areas in which they were most needed and increased class sizes, reduced the Adult Education program, eliminated high school transportation and junior varsity sports and reduced the number of interventions offered to our underperforming students. These measures also resulted in the necessity to layoff teachers and eliminate management and classified positions.

Unfortunately, even after making all of these very difficult cuts, we were left with a structural deficit of about \$3 million for this year, which we handled through one-time re-



serves. Now we have to make up that ongoing deficit and the additional \$5 million of revenue cuts we are expecting for 2010/2011. We are currently facing an \$8 million shortfall for the 2010/2011 school year.

Superintendent's Cabinet is currently looking at each and every position and department budget to determine where reductions must be made. Of course, our goal is to maintain as much of our base instructional program and student services as possible. However, we are working with a budget that has already suffered massive cuts. There is not much left that would not have a significant impact on staff and students.

It is going to take all of us—Cabinet, management and all of our employees—working together to come up with the best ways to address this fiscal crisis. We cannot proceed as we have in the past, and we

must stay focused on our mission of increased academic achievement for each of our students.

We are extremely grateful and appreciative of the collaborative spirit of our staff as well as the continued support of our parents, students and community members. I know that we will get through this together and be stronger than ever. If you have any suggestions on cost-saving measures that you feel may not have been addressed or adequately considered, please e-mail [info@psud.us](mailto:info@psud.us). All suggestions will be reviewed by Cabinet and shared with our Board of Education members.

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