



A Supplement from the...

# Palm Springs Unified School District

Serving Cathedral City, Desert Hot Springs, Palm Desert, Palm Springs, Rancho Mirage & Thousand Palms

April/May 2016

## Five PSUSD Elementary Schools Receive Gold Ribbon Designation

Bubbling Wells, Cielo Vista Charter, Katherine Finchy, Rancho Mirage and Rio Vista Elementary Schools are among the schools in the state named California Gold Ribbon schools.

Representatives from each of the honored schools will receive their award at the 2016 California School Recognition Awards Ceremony & Dinner in Anaheim with all winners from Riverside, San Bernardino, Imperial, Orange and San Diego Counties on May 10. State Superintendent of Schools Tom Torlakson will present the awards to the winning schools.

Schools are recognized for improving student outcomes as measured through standardized testing and other measures. Schools that made significant progress in their effort to successfully implement the newly adopted state standards along with academic contents and performance standards were eligible to self-nominate for the distinguished school program. Applications earning at least 160 points moved forward in the process for a subsequent review and possible visit by California Department of Education administrators.

Cathedral City High School was one of the state's secondary schools to receive a Gold Ribbon designation last year.

## Mexican Consulate Partners with District to Increase Parent Literacy

A new partnership between the Mexican Consulate and Palm Springs Unified School District's Parent Center will make it possible for District parents who did not complete their primary or secondary education to increase their literacy skills.

"Community Plaza" is a family literacy program that will begin in May with offerings in primary/secondary education and early literacy taught in Spanish. PSUSD officials recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Consulado de Mexico en San Bernardino Deputy Consul Hugo Rene Oliva Romero regarding the partnership. At the signing, the Consulate also donated books and materials for the program.

The program, which is specifically for individuals from Latin American countries will offer a wide range of services, including Early Literacy and the opportunity to receive an

elementary or secondary school certificate with a pathway to college through the Mexican Consulate office.

The Early Literacy program will focus on building literacy skills in order to earn an elementary school certificate in preparation for the Plazas Secondary Certificate. The primary and secondary instructional program will focus on assisting families in earning their secondary school certificate from the Mexican Consulate in preparation for a California High School Diploma pathway.

The program also provides personal and professional growth opportunities, access to digital media, online courses and networking opportunities with other institutions of higher learning. The Consulate is currently training Parent Coordinator Dr. Ingrid Lin and parent volunteers to administer the program.

The purpose of "Community Plaza" is to encourage, promote and operate educational services for Mexican/Latino Americans, aged 15 and older, who live in Riverside County. Monitored by Lin, the program will be held at the Parent Center labs in Palm Springs and Desert Hot Springs with facilities and technology provided by PSUSD. Primary/secondary courses will be offered on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9 to 11 a.m. and Early Literacy on Tuesdays from 9 to 10:30 a.m. For more information, call (760) 416-1374.



Mexican Consulate Deputy Consul Hugo Rene Oliva Romero, PSUSD Assistant Superintendent of Business Services Dr. Brian Murray and PSUSD Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services Dr. Mike Swize, signing Memorandum of Understanding for "Community Plaza."

## DIGICOM Film Festival Set for May 3 at Convention Center

DIGICOM's annual film festival is set for May 3 at the Palm Springs Convention Center and promises to be the biggest and best yet. The finishing touches are being put in place for this Oscars-style, red-carpet community event on the heels of DIGICOM's first fund-raising luncheon held earlier this month at the Palm Springs Hilton.

Themed "It's About Time," the DIGICOM film

festival is free and open to the public. It begins at 6:30 p.m., and seating is first-come, first-served. The event was filled to capacity last year, and people had to be turned away. For more information about the Festival or to donate to DIGICOM, visit <https://www.digicomfilmfestival.com/> or call (760) 625-8782.

The DIGICOM "It's All About the Kids" first fund-raising luncheon included a silent auction and

raised funds to support scholarships and classroom grants for equipment and extracurricular activities to be awarded at the film festival as well as DIGICOM after school programs at the middle schools.

The luncheon included a video presentation explaining the purpose and scope of DIGICOM. Students and teachers from throughout the District presented at the event as well."

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# District Digest



**District Teachers of the Year:** Agua Caliente Elementary teacher Megan Peterson, top, second from left; Desert Springs Middle School teacher Lauren Roos, center, and Rancho Mirage teacher Ruby Rivera, bottom, center, were recently chosen as PSUSD District Teachers of the Year by a panel of last year's District Teachers of the Year and Palm Springs Teachers Association President Mark Acker. All three are now vying for Riverside County Teacher of the Year honors. Pictured with the winners is Supt. of Schools Dr. Christine Anderson; Agua Caliente Principal Dr. Lucy Hansen, top, left, and Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction Tony Knapp, top, right; Desert Springs Principal Dr. Kiela Snider, center, right; and Rancho Mirage High Principal Dr. Ken Wagner, bottom, right.



**County Administrators of the Year:** Riverside County Superintendent of Schools Kenn Young, left and right, recently came to the PSUSD District Office to surprise two administrators with the announcement that they have been chosen as Riverside County Administrators of the Year. Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Mauricio Arellano, right, was named Certificated Administrator of the Year; and GATE/Linked Learning Teacher on Special Assignment Erik Mickelson, left, second from right, was chosen as Site Support Educator of the Year. Both will be honored at the Celebrating Educators Luncheon on May 10 in Riverside. Also pictured is Asst. Supt. of Educational Services Mike Swize and Supt. of Schools Dr. Christine Anderson.



## PSUSD Board of Education

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## PSUSD Administration

Christine J. Anderson, Ed. D., *Superintendent*  
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Brian Murray, Ed.D., *Assistant Superintendent, Business Services*  
Mike Swize, Ed. D., *Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services*

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**MTU in Big Apple:** About 40 students from PSUSD's Musical Theatre University (MTU) spent part of their spring break vacation in the Big Apple learning from Broadway professionals through various workshops, seeing Broadway shows and performing a Cabaret show and original staged reading at "54 Below," the location of the former "Studio 54." MTU is an afterschool theater arts program housed at Rancho Mirage High School and open to all PSUSD students, by audition. Students from outside the District can also participate as space permits. While the overall program is free to all participants, students who attended the New York Intensive covered their own expenses. Pictured with the students is Broadway actress Stephanie Block, bottom, fourth from left.

**Celebrating Dr. Seuss' Birthday:** Bubbling Wells, Cathedral City, Landau and Rancho Mirage Elementary Schools celebrated "Read Across America Day" and Dr. Seuss' birthday by inviting community guests to read Dr. Seuss books to the students. Landau Principal Wendy Meka really got into the spirit by dressing as Dr. Seuss himself.



**PSHS Spanish Honor Society Gift to Board:** Members of Palm Springs High School's Spanish Honor Society recently gave the Board of Education an overview of the program, which is a four-year commitment for high school students focused on Spanish literature/language excellence through AP courses. PSHS' chapter, established in 2011, is the only chapter in the Coachella Valley, and there are 363 students currently enrolled. In 2011, there were 18 AP Spanish literature students. This year there are 78. Following the presentation, instructor Erika Omier, second from left, and Society officers, from left, Vice President Giselle Zarate, Student Activity Coordinators Alejandra Valdez and Kathy Luna, Secretary Damaris Robles and Treasurer Esteban Medina, presented a Society sash to Board of Education President Shari Stewart.

## DigiCom

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“They talked about how DIGICOM has changed their school lives and the value of integrating digital storytelling into all areas of curriculum as a 21st Century learning tool,” said DIGICOM President and Founder David Vogel. “We also showed a couple of short film examples of the students’ work and had a special preview of this year’s film festival.”

While the luncheon is DIGICOM’s only official fund raiser, financial support for the programs is solicited throughout the year from the community, foundations, corporations and local organizations to enhance District funding for some of the training, programs and awards provided by DIGICOM during the school year and summer.

## Students Learning Wonders of Desert Through ASES Program

Jason Bruecks’ family moved to the Coachella Valley 40 years ago when he was just seven years old. Seeing the fascination he had with his surroundings, his mom enrolled him in a desert nature class at the then Palm Springs Desert Museum, and he was hooked. Today, Bruecks is sharing his desert knowledge and passion with PSUSD elementary and middle school students through his 7-week “Our Desert” afterschool course.

At 18 years old, Bruecks started taking people on desert hikes. Three years ago, he started his business “Distance to Be Traveled Hiking and Outdoor Adventures.”



**Our Desert instructor Jason Bruecks with Rio Vista Elementary students.**

## Second Annual Health Glo Run Slated for May 7

Healthy, fit, active students learn better. That’s the science behind the Palm Springs Unified School District’s 2nd Annual Health Glo Run-Walk event on Saturday, May 7, 2016 in downtown Cathedral City. Produced by the Palm Springs Unified School District Foundation, the City of Cathedral City and the Cathedral City Rotary Club, the run/walk event is a way for the community to celebrate the fact that exercise optimizes learning while raising funds to support Foundation classroom grants.

The event kicks off at 5 p.m. with a health fair produced by the Rotary Club of Cathedral City that will include physical activities, health resources and screenings, exercise demonstrations and healthy food vendors. There will also be an outdoor climbing wall. Admission to the Health Fair is free. 5K Glo Run/Walk

registration is \$45 for ages 14 and older and \$35 for ages 5 to 13. Registration for the 1 mile stroller fun run/walk is \$25 for ages 5 and up. To register online, go to [www.healthglo5k.com](http://www.healthglo5k.com).

In-person registration with body-paint stations will open at 5 p.m. on run/walk day at 68700 Avenida Lalo Guerrero, Cathedral City. The 1 mile Fun-Run/Walk kicks off at 7:30 p.m., followed by the 5K Fun-Run/Walk at 8:30 p.m. DJ beats will fill the air throughout the event as well as during the after-party immediately following the event. The event is a course of “Glo-tastic” fun. As participants make their way through the course, they will be doused with glow paint at various glo zones. New for this second year are a splash zone, paint slip and slides and more black lights! For more information, call (760) 416-8455.

## District Administrators Named Tops in County

Four Palm Springs Unified School District Administrators have been named Administrators of the Year by Region XIX of the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and are now vying for state honors in their respective categories.

The honorees include: Director of Student Services Jane Mills, pupil personnel administrator; Bubbling Wells Elementary Assistant Principal Dr. La-Trice Johnson, elementary co-administrator; Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction Tony Knapp, central office administrator; and English Learner Coordinator Eric Antuna, Valuing Diversity Award. All will be honored at the region celebration in June in Palm Springs.

The honorees were submitted by the Palm Springs Leadership Association (PSLA) charter of ACSA for PSUSD. Other PSLA nominees for Region XIX honors included: Rancho Mirage High Principal Dr. Ken Wagner, James Workman Middle School Principal Brad Sauer, Rio Vista Elementary Principal Mike Long, Cathedral City High Assistant Principal Karen Dimick, Director of Secondary Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Anne Kalisek, Director of Special Education Kathy Little and Assistant Superintendent of Business Services Dr. Brian Murray.