



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 2016

District Implements Communication Tool Both Innovative and Cost-Saving

The Palm Springs Unified School District has launched a new communication tool called "Peachjar." School-approved eflyers can now be accessed by simply clicking the Peachjar button on a school's website homepage.

This "green" initiative will save PSUSD tons of paper and thousands of dollars in copy costs. In addition, posting school flyers in an electronic backpack removes a significant administrative burden from teachers, office staff and volunteers.

If an e-mail address is already on file with the District with a child's emergency information card or a ParentVue account, no action is required to access Peachjar. Users will receive a welcome email from Peachjar that includes a username and password, giving them the opportunity to manage their account and flyer delivery preferences. No login is required to receive or view school eflyers.

Parents need to ensure that their children's emergency card information includes the correct e-mail address. If there are changes to the address, phone or e-mail information, the school(s) where the children attend need to be notified. Parents are also encouraged to obtain a ParentVue account if they don't already have one. They may be obtained from the child's school.

To ensure smooth delivery of the Peachjar flyers, the District suggests adding "school@peachjar.com" to email contacts. When the first eflyer is received, be sure to click "always display images." Parents without internet access are welcome to use a computer at Parent Centers in Palm Springs or Desert Hot Springs or ask any school site for computer availability. Paper flyers are also posted or available at school sites as well.

This system is used exclusively for distribution of school-approved and district-approved flyers. Email addresses will not be shared or used for any other purpose.



2016–2017 School Year Commences

Palm Springs Unified School District opens the 2016-17 school year on Wednesday, Aug. 10. 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 the application for free and reduced lunch when they receive it at the start of the school year. The district receives federal funds based upon the number of students who qualify for the program, regardless of whether students choose to use the services.

All Palm Springs Unified School District students entering the 7th grade this school year, and all new PSUSD students entering 7th through 12th grade, must show proof of an adolescent whooping cough booster (called "Tdap") to attend school. District officials are asking that

students be immunized as soon as possible and present proof of immunization at their school site immediately.

The state Legislature also has passed a new law requiring all students, other than those with a medical waiver signed by a physician, to be fully immunized in order to attend school. The law went into effect January 1, 2016. Students who are not in compliance are required to enroll in an independent study or home schooling program in order to receive a public school education.

For more information on immunization requirements, contact your individual school site or the District Office at (760) 416-6000.



**WEDNESDAY
Aug. 10**

Brings 28 Years of Experience to the Job

PSUSD Welcomes New Superintendent



Lyon

District welcomes new Superintendent of Schools Sandra Lyon. Lyon joins PSUSD from Santa Monica-Malibu School District where she served as the Superintendent of Schools for the past five years. She replaces Dr. Christine Anderson, who retired after serving as Superintendent for five years and Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services for four years.

"With outside eyes, I hope to be able to help staff see where we can pivot, where we can add, how we might change to improve outcomes for our students," said Lyon. "Then we work collectively and collaboratively to make the necessary shifts."

Lyon, 54, began in PSUSD on July 1 and is in her 28th year in education. She has served as chief leadership offi-

cer for the Palmdale School District for two years and was also the Superintendent/Principal of Hughes-Elizabeth Lakes School District in the Antelope Valley for three years. She has also served as an English and Language Arts teacher, Title 1 coordinator/at-risk teacher, elementary and middle school principal and director of curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Lyon received a bachelor's degree in journalism from San Francisco State University and a masters in curriculum and instruction from Cal State Bakersfield. She is currently enrolled in the University of Southern California (USC) Organizational Change and Leadership Doctoral program.

Lyon, and her husband, Paul, a high school teacher in Antelope Valley, have two adult sons.

"I'm so excited and honored to be here," said Lyon. "This is the right time in the right community for me, and I'm looking forward to working with the board and leadership team in improving parent engagement, closing the achievement gap and working (Cont'd on page 4)



REAL INTERNS RECOGNIZED: Juniors and seniors in Desert Hot Springs High's Renewable Energy Academy of Learning (REAL) who completed internships with GRID Alternatives, a non-profit solar panel installation company, during this past school year were recently presented with certificates from GRID Alternatives' Matthew Lunn (rear center) at a special ceremony.

DHSHS SWEEPS 'SPOKEN WORD'



AWARDS: Students from Desert Hot Springs High took the top honors in the District's recent 9th Annual All District High School Spoken Word event held at the Black Box Theater at Rancho Mirage High. Pictured (l-r) are PSUSD Arts Coordinator Louisa Castrodale; DHSHS winners Filiberto Moreno, Adan Trujillo, Amanda Garcia and Yesenia Vasquez; and event emcee, nationally renowned storyteller David Gonzalez.

District Digest



BEST AWARD WINNERS HONORED: Five Palm Springs Unified staff members and parents and two District students were recently honored with awards from the Bilingual Educators Succeeding Together (BEST) of Riverside County. Honorees included, from left, Desert Hot Springs High Academic Coach Adriana Brenes-Rios, Nellie N. Coffman parent Alicia Gomez, NNC Parent Liaison Yesenia Vasquez, Desert Springs Middle School teacher Olivia Mejorado, DSMS Principal Dr. Kiela Snider, and students Giselle Zarate (Palm Springs High) and Moises Hernandez (Rancho Mirage High). Zarate and Hernandez were two of six county seniors who received \$1,000 scholarships from BEST.



CCHS STUDENTS ATTEND SWITZERLAND CONFERENCE: Cathedral City High Principal Guillermo Chavez and IB Coordinator Ed Perry accompanied eight incoming junior IB Diploma candidates to the International Baccalaureate World Student Conference in Switzerland this summer. From left, Edgar Recendiz, Alvaro Ulloa, Lilliana Zamora, Adriana Ortega, Alma Diaz De Leon, Joseline Cabrera, Sergio Camacho and David Sanchez, at the conference. CCHS begins its second year of the IB program this coming school year.

CCHS BUILDING'S NEW NAME IS UNVEILED: The Board of Education and Cathedral City High School recently unveiled the new name of the 700 building, home of the Digital Arts and Technology Academy (DATA). It was named for community member David Vogel in recognition of his extensive donation of time, talent and resources to DATA. Vogel started volunteering in the DATA classroom eight years ago, helping students learn how to create short, meaningful digital stories. Today, he leads the District's Digital Literacy Teacher Training Institute and produces DIGICOM, a student and staff film showcase. Pictured, from left, are CCHS Principal Guillermo Chavez, retired Supt. of Schools Dr. Christine Anderson, Board of Education members James Williamson and Richard Clapp, Vogel, Board of Education member Karen Cornett and Board of Education President Shari Stewart.



PARENTS COMPLETE TRAINING PROGRAM: About 110 parents graduated from the District's spring "Project 2 Inspire" Program with several attending a recent graduation ceremony. The focus of the program is to develop school capacity to meaningfully engage parents in their child's education with the goal of increasing their child's academic achievement. The program, in English and Spanish, works with parents to increase their knowledge about schooling to ensure that parents have vital information about high quality educational options for their children. It offers school, family, and community engagement opportunities that involve all stakeholders. It focuses on building action teams that lead to partnerships among schools and community members. Some graduates completed Level 1, some Level 2, and some Level 3. The courses were taught by one of 19 mentors/ambassadors who completed all levels in the summer of 2015. All of the modules in this program are in alignment with the District's strategic plan. Project 2 Inspire is organized by California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE). Parents who have completed all levels are eligible to become mentors/ambassadors as well.

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LOCAL CHURCH PROMOTES SUMMER READING: Congregants from St. Anthony Episcopal Church in Desert Hot Springs spearheaded the "St. Anthony's Summer Reading Challenge" at Bubbling Wells Elementary School as school let out for the summer. Retired educator Dr. Betty Creamer, front, right, prepared a grant proposal to the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego's Fearless Love Grant program and received \$1,200 for this project. Working with former Principal Dr. Steve Marlatt, left (who is now at Rio Vista Elementary), they provided books for students completing second grade. In June, they distributed backpacks that included 10 books, a reading journal and school supplies. In order to encourage reading school-wide, they are also providing reading journals for grades 1, 3 and 4 designed by Creamer and printed by St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Palm Desert. As an incentive, they are also providing one bicycle per grade level. All students who return to school next week with a completed summer reading journal will be entered in a bike drawing for his/her grade level.

Administrators are Announced

As the 2016-17 PSUSD school year begins, some administrators have changed roles and others are new to the PSUSD family.

Upon the retirement of Kathy Little, Pamela Branch has been named the new Director of Special Education. Branch joins PSUSD from Torrance Unified, where she served as Director of Special Education. She also served as Regional Director of Special Education for the Los Angeles County Office of Education and Fresno County Office of Education.



Branch The new Principal of Early Childhood Education is Myra Acosta, replacing Joan Prehoda, who retired last month. Acosta joins PSUSD from Moreno Valley Unified where she served as Director of Head Start and State Preschool.

Bubbling Wells Elementary Principal Dr. Steve Marlatt is the new Principal of Rio Vista Elementary School, replacing Mike Long, who moved out of state. Former James Workman Middle School Assistant Principal Omar Tinoco is the new Principal at Bubbling Wells.



Tinoco

Desert Hot Springs Counselor Lisa Todd is the new Assistant Principal at Nellie N. Coffman Middle School. Brenda Santana, who taught at Sunny Sands Elementary School, is a new Assistant Principal at James Workman Middle School. Mathew Hammond is the new Assistant Principal at Bella Vista Elementary. Hammond previously served as academic coach at Vista del Monte and also taught at Cahuilla Elementary.



Todd

Several middle school assistant principals will be assuming the same responsibility this year, but at different schools: NNC's Greg Loewen is moving to Painted Hills Middle School; Raymond Cree's Beth Drohan to James Workman; and James Workman's Sue Hilsabeck to Raymond Cree.

Tanisha Taylor has joined PSUSD as the new Intervention Coordinator. Taylor comes from Inglewood Unified, where she was a middle school assistant principal. She will be working with essential students and has extensive experience in Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports, cognitive coaching, and equity and diversity issues.

New Superintendent

(Cont'd from page 1) closely with all stakeholders. This presents me with the opportunity to serve a district where equity issues and student achievement are the unwavering focus of the full school community."

Lyon was chosen by the Board of Education following an extensive search process led by Leadership Associates.

"Sandra brings a wealth of experience and leadership skills with her," said Board of Education President Shari Stewart. "She possesses a passion for education and a belief that all students can excel and become lifelong learners in a learning community where students and educators thrive."

Community members are invited to attend one of three receptions to meet Superintendent Lyon. They are scheduled for Aug. 17 at Raymond Cree Middle School, Aug. 24 at James Workman Middle School and Aug. 31 at Desert Springs Middle School. All are from 4 to 5:30 p.m. Reservations are not required.



New Superintendent Sandra Lyon joined PSUSD on July 1.

Message from the Superintendent

Building Relationships on New Leader's Agenda

It is a true honor and pleasure to serve as the Palm Springs Unified School District's Superintendent of Schools. I am looking forward to getting to know the members of the PSUSD family - administrators, staff, students, parents, community business representatives and residents.

I visited this area many times when I was serving as a Thinking Maps consultant and have always loved the area and the desert. I was also very impressed with the professionalism and dedication of the PSUSD staff I worked with when I was consulting. I remember being here one weekend during one of the trainings. Having coffee with my husband, Paul, I looked out at the mountains and remarked how great it would be to live

and work here. At that time, I was assisting my mom with some of her needs, so looking for a position in PSUSD wasn't an option.



When the Superintendent's post came open, I went home and talked to Paul about it, and he encouraged me to apply.

My first goal is to get to know people, understand the culture and build relationships. I have always told my staff members that there is no magic bullet. If it were that easy to boost achievement quickly and close gaps overnight, it would be done. Yet, it can be done. The work has already started, and

progress has been made. I am convinced that PSUSD is poised to be a district that leads the way in improving student achievement. I want to work to build that collective vision and focus our attention on the right next steps to make a difference for our kids.

At a school site or within a district department, everyone has to do his/her part - both individually and collaboratively - and also understand that he/she contributes to the larger system overall. What it's really all about is being in the mode of continuous improvement for the sake of our entire learning community and all the students we serve.

I hope to have the opportunity to meet as many of you as possible at our upcoming "Meet and Greet" receptions at three of our

middle schools. They are scheduled for Aug. 17 at Raymond Cree, Aug. 24 at James Workman and Aug. 31 at Desert Springs, all from 4 to 5:30 p.m. You are cordially invited to attend any of these regardless of your area of residency, and no reservations are necessary.

Thank you for making me feel welcome and for your past, present and future support of PSUSD. Should you have any suggestions, please feel free to e-mail me at slyon@psusd.us.

Sandra Lyon

Superintendent of Schools