



A Supplement from the...

Palm Springs Unified School District

Serving Cathedral City, Desert Hot Springs, Palm Desert, Palm Springs, Rancho Mirage & Thousand Palms December/January 2016

JASI Grooming Student Athletes at Rancho Mirage High

As a young team at a brand new high school, the first two seasons for the Rancho Mirage High School Rattlers football team were not ones for the record books. With its first graduating class in the wings, this year's RMHS' varsity football team has much to brag about this season.

The team won just one game in both the first and second seasons. This year, they finished the season with an 8 and 2 record and went on to the second game in the play offs. Some of the success can be attributed to more experience, of course. But at RMHS, there is something else going on.

Many of the football players are currently enrolled in the school's first sports institute aimed at teaching and promoting the skills needed to be a successful athlete. The program was started as a pilot last February by NFL Super-Agent Dr. Jerry Argovitz, a part-time Rancho Mirage resident who went from being a dentist to owning the former NFL's Houston Gamblers and representing some of the top NFL players for many years.

Currently 65 football players meet with Argovitz in the JASI (Jerry Argovitz Sports Institute) once each week during an elective class. They learn how to lead a successful life through participation in sports, balance sports and academics, and gain leadership skills for athletics and for life.



Mentoring Through JASI: Dr. Jerry Argovitz with JASI football players, from left, David Mares, Sergio Julian, Jerry, Marques Prior, Johnny Avila

"Last year when we started the pilot program and met with these kids, no one believed they could be winners," said Argovitz, who along with his hand-on mentoring has donated \$1 million to Rancho Mirage

High and had the RM High Stadium named in his honor last week. "These were young kids, and the leadership was lacking from the team itself. We worked through the JASI process, and they made a commitment.

"The proof is in the pudding," Argovitz continued, adding that while the team's record made him proud, his biggest sense of pride came from seeing some students raise grades from D's and F's to A's and B's. "It was amazing to see the trust and respect they developed and watching them become leaders."

While the program is continuing this year with just football players, Argovitz said the plan is to expand it next year to include male and female athletes in other sports. Argovitz is joined in the Institute by guest speakers including NFL athletes and coaches, college recruiters and business people.

"If I look at life as a football game, these kids are in the first quarter, and I am in the fourth quarter. I understand where some of these kids are coming from and the help that they need."

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PSUSD in Need of Additional Substitute Teachers

The Palm Springs Unified School District is currently hiring substitute teachers, and if you hold a bachelor's degree, you are eligible to apply.

There is currently a high need for substitute teachers, especially at the early childhood and elementary school levels. The daily salary for District substitutes was recently increased to \$135 to \$155 for short-term assignments and \$155 to \$175 for long-term assignments (the higher rate is for Desert Hot Springs schools). Minimum requirements include a bachelor's degree, current negative TB test prior to hire and passage of a Livescan fingerprint/background check upon offer of employment.

A usual requirement for substitute teaching in California is also a passing score on the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST). However, a CBEST waiver is now available for candidates interested in substitute teaching who have not yet passed the exam. The candidate must apply for a certificate of clearance with the Commission on Teacher Credentialing). Once the certificate is issued, PSUSD can submit the CBEST waiver application and provide the applicant with assistance as needed. In order to obtain the CBEST waiver, candidates must provide an official sealed transcript verifying a bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited university along with the application fee.

PSUSD substitute teachers have one year from the waiver issue date in order to pass the CBEST and continue as a District substitute.

Substitute teacher applications should be submitted online and must include: a letter of introduction, two letters of reference and proof of bachelor's degree. If you are interested in applying to be a substitute in the Palm Springs Unified School District, visit www.Edjoin.org and search key words "Palm Springs Unified School District, Substitute Teacher."

For more information on the substitute teacher application process, call Human Resources Specialist Jessica Martinez at (760) 416-6092.

District Digest



Foundation Presents Record Number of Classroom Grants: The Foundation for the Palm Springs Unified School District recently presented its annual classroom grants funding a total of 21 projects totaling over \$27,000, the largest annual amount the Foundation has provided to date. Teachers are invited to apply for the grants annually, and a subcommittee of the Foundation's board reviews and selects the grantees.



Seniors Take PSHS Homecoming Parade Honors: Palm Springs High School, its school clubs, city elementary and middle schools, school and district and city officials and representatives from community organizations recently took over Palm Canyon Drive in downtown Palm Springs for PSHS' annual Homecoming Parade themed "Disney Villains." Parade grand marshal was KMIR's Julie Buehler. The seniors took the float honors, and the football team took the game honors over Indio High two days later.



CCES Marks Red Ribbon Week With Different Theme Each Day: Students in their PJs with their teddy bears gathered with Mrs. Orduno during "Follow Your Dreams and Bring Your Teddy Bear" day as part of the school's observance of Red Ribbon Week that focuses on the dangers of drug and alcohol.



Farrell Building Boasts New Xeriscape Project: District, city and community organization officials recently came together to cut the ribbon on the new Xeriscape project at the PSUSD Parent Center and Mental Health Services building on Farrell Road. After the success of the recent Palm Springs High landscape project on Ramon Road, Director of Facilities Planning Julie Arthur contacted MaryBrent Wehrli, president of the Desert Horticulture Society of the Coachella Valley, who agreed that the project would be very worthwhile. Desert Water Agency and the city of Palm Springs supported the idea as well, and grants were filed with both entities to help with project costs. Tom Doczi of TKD Landscape Architects was contacted by Wehrli, and he graciously agreed to provide the landscape drawing and expertise for free.



Soroptimists Honor Teachers of Year: Soroptimist International of Palm Springs recently honored the PSUSD city of Palm Springs Teachers of the Year for 2015-16 at a Board of Education meeting followed by a reception at Nicolino's Restaurant. SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union sponsored the Target gift cards and reception, and the Soroptimist club provided each teacher with a personalized tote bag and certificates of recognition from local and state elected officials. Pictured, from left, are SIPS treasurer Tracy Piper; Teachers of the Year Michael Bertsch, Cahuilla Elementary; Jamie Wittig, Cielo Vista Charter; Edna Byers, Katherine Finchy Elementary; Nicole Musial, Vista del Monte Elementary; Jennifer O'Connor, Alternative Education; SIPS President Sharon Snow; SIPS Vice President of Service Joan Boiko; Raymond Cree Middle TOY Michele Valenzuela; Palm Springs High TOY Frank Tucker; and Early Childhood Education TOY Kassandra Dorado.

Rotary Supports The Arts: The Palm Springs Sun-up Rotary Club recently presented PSUSD's Arts Coordinator Louisa Castrodale, below, third from left, with a check for \$2,500 for District part programs as a result of last spring's successful Chalk Art program. Presenting the check are Rotarians, from left, Carrie Allen, Dennis Spurgin, Kristin Bloomer, President Tony Gentry, Kathleen Hallock and Harry Stone



PSUSD Program Receives County Recognition: PSUSD Human Resources Department's Skillful Leader program, aimed at providing school administrators with the an increased ability to successfully evaluate teachers was one of the 13 programs recognized as a Riverside County "Model of Excellence" at the recent 13th Annual Riverside County Education Summit at the Palm Springs Convention Center. Pictured, from left, are Supt. of Schools Dr. Christine Anderson, former Director of Certificated Human Resources Dr. Tony Signoret, Director of Classified Human Resources LaSonya Pitts, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Mauricio Arellano, Director of Certificated Human Resources Andrea Credille, Board of Education Member Richard Clapp, Board of Education President Karen Cornett, Board of Education Clerk Shari Stewart and Riverside County Supt. of Schools Kenn Young.



RM Rotary Presents Dictionaries To RME Students: Members of the Rancho Mirage Rotary Club recently presented dictionaries to every third grade student at Rancho Mirage Elementary School, one of several annual projects funded by the club to support programs at RME and Rancho Mirage High.

Retired Teachers Raise Funds for Scholarships: The California Retired Teachers Association Division 89 recently held a fund raising silent auction and cocktail reception at the home of Dr. Craig and Dr. Michele Borba. Proceeds go toward CRTA scholarships for PSUSD seniors. Pictured, below, from left are CRTA members Marguerite Jezo and Susan Hurst and President Maureen Ferriter.



HEAL Students Take Shakeout Very Seriously: Most schools in the state join cities, residents and other institutions for the annual California Great Shakeout earthquake drill in order to practice duck, cover and hold and evacuation procedures and to raise awareness of the need to be prepared for the "Big One." At Cathedral City High School each year, the drill is taken to a much larger magnitude due to the efforts of staff members and students in the Health Environmental Academy of Learning (HEAL) who respond to emergency situations including simulated injuries and deaths. The seniors who perform the triage operations are those who were trained as juniors in Certified Emergency Response Training (CERT) last year and who would be among the responders in an actual community emergency.

REAL Students Learn Skills At Showcase: Eight students from Desert Hot Springs High School's Renewable Energy Academy of Learning (REAL) were among students from five regional high schools who recently participated in a two-day Solar Futures Showcase in Moreno Valley. Under the direction of GRID Alternatives and SunPower, the students learned to install solar electric systems for low-income families. Educators were invited to learn about opportunities for high schools to bring renewable energy curricula into their classrooms.



More than 40 Colleges Represented at RMHS Fair: Colleges from throughout California and from states throughout the country were represented at Rancho Mirage High School's recent first college fair. In addition to the universities and colleges, trade and business schools and financial and scholarship institutions and programs were represented as well. Pictured above is RMHS Assistant Principal Julio Omier, left, with students, at the table of his alma mater, Oregon State.

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JASI Grooming Athletes

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Jerry and Loni Argovitz

Argovitz, whose wife Loni works directly with the students as well, said the rewards and benefits go both ways.

"It's like a movie in the making," he said. "I am pushing these kids out of their comfort zones, and they study the material. Once you get it, you've got it. If you give someone food, you feed them for a day, but if you teach them how to grow the food, you feed them for a lifetime. I

have realized that it's not so much what you have, but what you give. They are doing a lot for me too."

Argovitz, 77, said having his name on the RMHS stadium was not the impetus for starting the Institute.

"That's something my wife wanted to do for me," he said. "She said, 'This is your legacy.' Well, yes, it will be there long after I'm gone. I'm glad I'm able to do some good to help these kids while I am here."

The University of Texas graduate, who spends half the year in Houston, says he is doing exactly what he wants to be doing.

"How much golf can you play?" he asked. "This becomes a blessing for everyone. When you have 20 kids get up and say 'Doc, you changed my life,' it doesn't get much better than that."

Administrators of Year Move on to Regional Competition

The Palm Springs Leadership Association (PSLA) has chosen 11 Palm Springs Unified School District administrators as nominees for regional honors by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA).

The following administrators have been named to represent PSLA as the charter's recommendations for ACSA Region XIX honors in the following categories:

- Rancho Mirage High Principal **Dr. Ken Wagner** – Secondary Principal
- James Workman Middle School Principal **Brad Sauer** – Middle School Administrator
- Rio Vista Elementary Principal **Mike Long** – Elementary Principal
- Bubbling Wells Elementary Assistant Principal **Latrice Johnson** – Elementary co-administrator
- Elementary Director of Curriculum and Instruction **Tony Knapp** – Central Office administrator

- Cathedral City High Assistant Principal **Karen Dimick** – Secondary co-administrator
- Secondary Director of Curriculum and Instruction **Dr. Anne Kalisek** – Curriculum and Instruction
- English Learner Coordinator **Eric Antuna** – Valuing Diversity
- Director of Special Education **Kathy Little** – Special Education
- Assistant Superintendent of Business Services **Dr. Brian Murray** – Business Services

Region XIX winners will be announced in January and honored at a dinner in the spring. All region honorees move forward to state ACSA competition. In 2014 and 2015, PSUSD had six regional winners. Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services **Dr. Mike Swize** also won at the state level in 2014, and Director of Technology Services **Will Carr** garnered state honors in 2013.

Message from the Superintendent

PSUSD Seeking Community Input on New LCAP



As we prepare for the District's first three-week winter break beginning next week, I want to wish all of our staff, District families and community members a happy holiday season and all the best in 2016! It's hard to believe that we are already getting ready to launch the second half of the 2015-16 school year.

With the start of 2016, we are currently working on the third year of our Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) and, once again, are seeking input from staff, students, parents and community members on changes, additions or deletions to our current plan.

As part of the state's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), all districts in California

are required to prepare a LCAP, which describes how we intend to meet annual goals for pupils, with specific activities to address state and local priorities identified. This past year, we have been able to provide some very special programs for our students, because we have more local control of our funding. As a result we have reduced class sizes; added instructional minutes to the middle school day; and increased the number of counselors, elementary physical education teachers and early literacy and middle school math coaches.

Other additions this year include:

- Desert Learning Academy (virtual school)
- Expansion of Full-Day Kindergarten
- One-to-one devices for all by end of year

- New Parent Resource Center
- Language Academy (Dual Language)
- Musical Theatre University
- Arts Summer Camps
- Cathedral City High School International Baccalaureate Program
- Return of Freshman Sports
- Automotive Academy at Rancho Mirage High (RACE)

We are proud of our efforts, but we know that there is more we can do. As we prepare our 2016-17 plan, we are asking that as many of our stakeholders as possible weigh in with their feedback and suggestions. Over the past month we held community meetings in Cathedral City, Desert Hot Springs and Palm Springs (the last of which was last week). If you were not able to attend one of these meetings,

you can still provide your input by responding to our online survey. The community survey can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HZDJ8V5> (English) or <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6LBQNH9> (Spanish). If you visit the home page of our website – www.psusd.us – you will also find links to our student and staff surveys as well and a copy of our current LCAP in English and Spanish. The deadline for survey response and input is Jan. 29, 2016.

Thank you, as always for your continued support. Have a wonderful and safe holiday season!

Christine Anderson, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools