



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 2015

## Third Graders Learning Good Nutrition, Swimming Skills



**Cielo Vista 'Ready, Set, Swim!' program "graduates" show off their accomplishment medals with, from left, rear, Boys and Girls Club of Palm Springs President Terry Tatum, PSUSD Supt. of Schools Dr. Christine Anderson, Palm Springs Mayor Steve Pougnet, Desert Healthcare Foundation President Kay Hazen, and Desert Healthcare Foundation Chief Executive Officer Kathy Greco.**

Thanks to a community partnership with the Desert HealthCare Foundation, Clinton Health Matters Initiative, Desert Recreation District and the city of Palm Springs, about 500 third grade students in Desert Hot Springs and Palm Springs elementary schools are learning to swim and garnering nutritional educational programming.

The goal of the "Ready, Set, Swim!" program is to teach third grade students the essential of swimming. Over a two-week period this winter and spring, the students attend eight classes, which includes 50 minutes of swim instruction led by the Desert Recreation District and 50 minutes of nutritional education led by the Boys and Girls Clubs of Desert Hot Springs and Palm Springs and the Riverside County Department of Public Health. Offered at no charge to the students, the program is focused on safety,

wellness and education in a fun environment.

"The City of Palm Springs is thrilled that the proceeds from the Mayor's Race is funding such a fantastic health and wellness program for students," said Palm Springs Mayor Steve Pougnet. "There's no better exercise than swimming, and when you start promoting health and wellness to youngsters early, the chances they will take it with them into adulthood is much greater. I want to thank Desert Healthcare Foundation for partnering with the City in this important endeavor."

Other community partners include PSUSD, which is funding the transportation to the Boys and Girls Clubs; Boys and Girls Clubs of DHS and PS; Family YMCA of the Desert; Riverside County Department of Public Health; John H. Furbee; Future Sports Products; and FIO Creative.

"On behalf of the Palm Springs Unified School District, our teachers, parents and students, I want to thank Mayor Pougnet for his efforts to ensure our third graders learn not only to swim, but also the importance of promoting and practicing health and wellness with their families and in the classroom," said PSUSD Supt. of Schools Dr. Christine Anderson. "Our goal is to educate students so they can succeed in life – and health and wellness is an important part of that mission."



**Cielo Vista third graders students receive swim instruction on their school's final day of the 'Ready, Set, Swim' program.**

## PSUSD Commemorates National School Breakfast Week of March 2

Students who eat breakfast at school start the day ready to learn, reflect higher test scores and better classroom behavior. However, only half of the children who eat lunch at school also eat school breakfast, according to the Food Research and Action Council. To increase student participation in the School Breakfast Program, Palm Springs Unified District schools will recognize National School Breakfast Week, March 2-6, 2015. National School Breakfast Week is a week long celebration aimed at increasing awareness of the School Breakfast Program among students and parents.

The 2015 National School Breakfast Week theme, "Make the Grade with School Breakfast" reminds everyone in the school community – parents, students, administrators – that a healthy school breakfast sets students up for a day of learning and academic success. The theme will appear in school cafeterias during National School Breakfast Week.

"Too many children are showing up at school hungry, and we know hungry children can't learn," said Nutrition Services Director Stephanie Bruce. "A healthy breakfast helps students focus in the classroom and perform better. That's why we offer a healthy breakfast every morning in our schools at no cost to students enrolled in Palm Springs Unified School District."

School cafeterias will promote school breakfast with brand new menu items, decorations and activities all week. Breakfast entrées include Maple-Bursting Mini Pancakes, an Ortega Omelet and more. In addition, principals and local officials will be invited to participate in serving breakfast. With boundless excitement, a new menu and their principals' encouragement, it is hoped that every student in the Palm Springs Unified School District will understand how important breakfast is to their daily routine.

# District Digest



**Rotary Presents Books to Cahuilla Students:** The Palm Springs Noon Rotary Club presented the gift of reading to the students of Cahuilla Elementary School just prior to the holidays. Each child had the opportunity to choose two new age-appropriate books to take home.



**Rudd Honored as 'Woman Who Rules':** Palm Springs High School's Partners In Education and Work-Based Learning Coordinator Fern Rudd, right, was named one of the four "Women Who Rule" at the recent Women Leaders Forum luncheon at the Agua Caliente Resort. Ms. Rudd received the Helene Galen Excellence in Education Award, presented by Galen. Congratulating Rudd is Women Leaders Forum President Deborah Tryon.



**Future Problem Solvers At Work:** The Junior Community Problem Solving Team (CmPS) at Katherine Finchy Elementary School, from left, Jhaiderly Vallejo, Alaysia Smoot, Elle Talala, Sam Hostrop, Joshua Barda, Breanna Garcia Guerrero and Shane Cameranesi with their advisor Leanne DiBella, left, recently shared their plans for their project to prepare themed care packages for children with cancer at Loma Linda Children's Hospital with some of their fellow students as they launched a school-wide Read-A-Thon fund raiser to pay for items for the care packages. Katherine Finchy Elementary School has the only junior team representing all of California in the Future Problem Solving International Program. The 5th grade team is also currently fund raising for two upcoming competitions: the California Future Problem Solving State Bowl, to be held near San Francisco in April and the Future Problem Solving International Conference at Iowa State University in Juen. The team, representing all of California, will compete by participating in interviews; manning an elaborate project display board during the CmPS Fair; and showing their Public Service Announcement video, scrapbook of the journey of the project, and involved final report to community members and judges. To support the team, visit: <http://www.gofundme.com/isk7pg>.



**'Flipping The Switch' On First District-Owned Solar Arrays:** Students from Desert Hot Springs High School's Renewal Energy Academy of Learning (REAL) were on hand for the recent 'Flip the Switch' ribbon cutting ceremony at Bubbling Wells Elementary School, commemorating PSUSD's first three District-owned solar arrays. Students educated attendees about the ground mount solar arrays located at Bubbling Wells and Two Bunch Palms Elementary Schools and solar covered parking structure at Desert Hot Springs High School. The structures were funded a \$3 million grant from the South Coast Air Quality Management District AB 1318 Mitigation Fees Fund and are anticipated to save the District \$4.2 million in energy costs over the next 20 years. The District-owned ground mount structures are in addition to the 11 solar canopies installed by SunEdison at various District sites expected to produce \$8 to \$10 million in energy cost savings over the next 20 years. Pictured with the REAL students are, second row, from left on right of banner, DHSHS Principal George Bullis, Board of Education member John Gerardi, Supt. of Schools Dr. Christine Anderson, and DHSHS Work-based Learning Coordinator John Mesicek.



**Bee Champ For Fifth Consecutive Year:** Jenna-May Ingal, left, an eighth grader at James Workman Middle School, won her fifth consecutive spelling bee at the recent 38th annual PSUSD Spelling Bee of Champions at Desert Hot Springs High School. She will represent the District at the Riverside County Bee in March. Runner-up was Raymond Cree Middle School eighth grader Sommer Alex, right.

## PSUSD Board of Education

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**Educators of the Year:** The Board of Education recently honored this year's District Educators of the Year including, from left: Communications Manager Joan Boiko, Classified Manager of Year; LVN Gerardine Dooley, Site Support Employee of Year; Career Technical Education and Linked Learning Director Dr. Diana LaMar, Certificated Manager of the Year; Rancho Mirage Elementary Administrative Secretary Brenda Martinez, Classified Employee of Year; Senior Credential Specialist Linda Riccio, Confidential Employee of Year; and Nellie N. Coffman Principal Lucinda Killebrew, Principal of the Year. All are now vying for county honors in their respective categories.



**Cielo Vista Fund Raiser Nets \$17,000:** Cielo Vista Charter Elementary School officials announced the launch of a capital campaign at the school's recent annual benefit held at the Frederick Loewe Estate. Former Palm Springs Mayor and current Cielo Vista Charter School Governing Board Secretary William Kleindienst told a crowd of about 200 guests at the fourth annual event that the school would need "millions" to build a new gym and multipurpose room to best accommodate 7th and 8th grade expansion. Kleindienst announced that an anonymous donor had presented a \$50,000 check that night to kick-off the fundraising effort. The Benefit itself, organized by the school's parent teacher group, raised about \$17,000 through ticket sales, silent auction and raffle drawings. A nine-member ensemble of the new Cielo Vista Charter School band, under the direction of Jillian Bacon, above, performed for the first time publicly, with three short songs. In honor of the beloved musical duo, Lerner and Loewe, two 6th graders also performed a *My Fair Lady* medley.



**PSHS Students Shadow Rotarians:** The Palm Springs Noon Rotary Club members recently hosted 14 Palm Springs High School students for its annual Job Shadow Day this week. The students spent the morning with local business representatives to learn about potential careers. Pictured with the students are, Dr. Denise Ellis, left, who chaired the program for the Rotary Club; Fern Rudd, second from left, work-based learning coordinator at Palm Springs High; and Thomas Smith, right, Rotary president.

**Up Close And Personal With Itzhak Perlman:** Students in James Workman Middle School's new string program had the honor of meeting Itzhak Perlman following his concert last month at the McCallum Theatre. Pictured with Perlman are from left, Alejandro Nunez; Band Director Jennifer-Dean Knapp; Nancy Stone, who donated the tickets for the students' attendance at the concert; Trinity Reyes; Lizbeth Gutierrez; Nicholas Carbajal; Kaia Olson; and Jaidyn Olson. Cindy Brogan is teaching the string program which currently includes about 40 students who are meeting each week. Dean is meeting with the students for a music theory class.



**Every Student Succeeding:** One student from each of the District's elementary, middle and high schools was honored by the Palm Springs Leadership Association (PSLA) at the recent "Every Student Succeeding" ceremony and reception at the Helene Galen Theatre at Rancho Mirage High School. Students were chosen by their teacher, counselor or principal for overcoming obstacles or adversity. Pictured above are the award recipients with Ryan Saunders, PSLA president. PSLA is comprised of administrators and managers of the PSUSD.

## ASES Program Adds "Edible Education" To After School Line-up

The Family YMCA of the Desert, which runs PSUSD's After School Enrichment and Safety Program (ASES), is continuously working to expand and enhance the offerings to the hundreds of students at the elementary and middle school locations who stay after school for the program each day.

"Edible Education" is a new culinary arts program for the ASES participants this school year. In an enthusiastic effort to teach children how to make healthy and easy food choices, Kelly Bradshaw, founder of Edible Education, presents students simple, delicious recipes for snacks and entrees that are fun to prepare, affordable and nutritious.

Both elementary and middle school students are enjoying the hands-on preparation as a class, with includes nutrition activities and discussion and games to bring the family together to make cooking and eating a togetherness time once again. There are always many conversations taking place with the students during these sessions, as they brainstorm the job duties they hope to assign to family members to create the same



Instructor Kelly Bradshaw and her Cabot Yerxa Elementary students enjoy their creations at an "Edible Education" class.

dishes at home that they are creating during the classes.

Bradshaw's education and background are in food and hotel restaurant management. Her passion is introducing and encouraging children to prepare and sample new, healthy foods ranging from Quinoa Gala apple salad to Mango salsa, to homemade vegetable soup on a chilly day.

"There is great joy when a parent approaches me and says their child is begging to make something at home that we have made during class, and they want to review the recipe," said Bradshaw. "That is when you know you have reached more than a student, but perhaps a family too!"

## District to Launch Language Academy

The Palm Springs Unified School District announces the launch of its first "Language Academy" in the 2015-16 school year.

The Language Academy, to begin at Vista del Monte Elementary School, is an English and Spanish language dual immersion program aimed at incoming kindergarten students. The mission of the program is to prepare kindergarten through fifth-grade students to excel academically in Spanish and English, to develop a lifelong love of learning, and to become bilingual, bi-literate, and multi-culturally competent leaders.

The Language Academy has emerged as a result of input from parents and families during the initial Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) stakeholder meetings during the winter and spring of 2014. Parents have become increasingly aware of the need for students to become bilingual and bi-literate. Additionally, the newly adopted California English-Language Arts/English Language Development Framework cites the importance of dual immersion programs.

"In California, bi-literacy is valued and the primary languages that (English Learners) bring to school are considered important resources, valuable in their own right and as a base from

which to develop English as an additional language," according to the Framework. "Also valued are the benefits to native speakers of English in becoming bilingual and bi-literate. While developmental bilingual programs provide means for (English Learners) to become bi-literate in their native language and English, two-way, or dual, immersion programs allow both (English Learners) and native English speakers to become bi-literate in each other's languages."

"Palm Springs Unified has always been on the cutting edge of innovative and exciting programs," said Eric Antuna, PSUSD's coordinator of English Language Learners. "The Language Academy will be a very high quality program. The benefits and opportunities will serve our students for years to come."

The program is open to all entering kindergarten students within the Palm Springs Unified School District. Parents who are interested in having their child involved in this program are encouraged to attend one of two information sessions scheduled for Tuesday March 17. The first meeting will be held at 9 a.m. at Vista del Monte, and an evening meeting is scheduled for 5 p.m. in the District Office Board Room in Palm Springs. For more information, call (760) 416-6080.

### Message from the Superintendent

## PSUSD Preparing for New Testing, LCAP Input Process



It's hard to believe that more than half of the school year is already behind us. It is a very busy time of the year as our students and staff prepare for our first foray into a brand new assessment system for California.

We piloted the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) tests last spring to make sure we were prepared in terms of the technology necessary for the new online testing as well as to gauge reaction from the students on how they will respond to these new tests. I'm happy to say our practice exams went quite well technically, and we feel our students are as prepared for what is coming this spring as are other students in California.

Our students are ready to tackle these

new assessments, which include performance tasks that challenge students to demonstrate critical thinking and problem-solving and to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world problems. The new assessments align with the skills students need to start taking courses at Cal State University campuses and other colleges. The system is designed to measure student growth over time, which was not possible in the state's previous system, and will provide teachers and schools important information to guide learning.

It is important for parents to know that the new tests are fundamentally different from the old exams, and reliable comparisons between old and new student achievement scores are not possible. This year's results will establish a new baseline for the progress we expect students to

make over time. Based on the trial runs, many, if not most, students will need to make significant progress to reach the standards set for math and literacy that accompany college and career readiness. Parents will receive a report with their child's scores. No student, parent or teacher should be discouraged by these new baseline scores, which will not be used to determine whether a student moves on to the next grade. Rather, the scores will represent an opportunity to focus on the needs of students and support teachers in their work to achieve college and career readiness for all.

Speaking of college and career readiness, we are currently preparing to begin our community input process for the second year of our Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). You may recall that we sought, and received, extensive

community input for our initial plan last year, and we are now coming back to our community stakeholders to once again ask them to work with us to make relevant changes, additions or deletions to our current plan. Our community input meetings are scheduled for 5:30 p.m. on March 3 at Raymond Cree, March 11 at James Workman and March 17 at Desert Hot Springs High. We hope you will provide us with your input and feedback either via our online survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YGZBRPM> (English), <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/58VRF5K> (Spanish), or by attending one of these meetings.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support.



Christine Anderson, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools