



A Supplement from the...

# Palm Springs Unified School District

Serving Cathedral City, Desert Hot Springs, Palm Desert, Palm Springs, Rancho Mirage & Thousand Palms October/November 2015

## PSUSD Program Honored as Model Initiative in Riverside County

A Palm Springs Unified School District program, aimed at providing school administrators with the an increased ability to successfully evaluate teachers, is one of the 13 programs being recognized as a Riverside County “Model of Excellence” at the Oct. 28 13th Annual Riverside County Education Summit at the Palm Springs Convention Center.

PSUSD’s “Skillful Leader Program,” developed by the District’s Human Resources department, focuses on improving the capacity of school site administrators to provide meaningful feedback through evidence-based narratives supported by ample sources of information. Through the program, principals collectively review the work of their colleagues, collaboratively develop exemplary models and are provided with a critique of their work with the goal of continuous capacity building.

Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Mauricio Arellano, Director of Classified Human

Resources La Sonya Pitts and other Human Resources staff members are presenting the program’s components to summit attendees during morning workshops, followed by the awards luncheon.

Administration of the Skillful Leader Program begins with an initial three-hour training that focuses on the need for every administrator to achieve the three ‘C’s: Competence, Conviction and Control. The training also includes developing develop the capacity to clearly communicate the expectation that every student receive rigorous instruction.

Another component of the program includes providing samples of clear and concise statements summarizing teacher performance, followed by a statement with detailed supporting evidence (known as Evidence Based Narratives). A further step is Collaborative Peer Review work to take a look at written teacher observation feedback, identify needs of improvement and provide colleagues with examples

on how to improve narratives to help teachers reflect properly on their practice and enhance instruction delivery. Administrators submit copies of formal and informal documentation related to feedback periodically throughout the year. Program concepts and practices are reviewed each month at principals’ meetings.

Since the initial introduction of the program in 2012, the administrative team has made significant improvement and is viewed as having the capacity to identify good instruction, provide meaningful support to assist teachers to get to mastery and identify school-wide trends that generate focused and relevant staff development.

“The PSUSD Skillful Leader Program has provided our administrative team with the common philosophy to provide meaningful feedback to teachers, focused on the ultimate goal of providing every student with the best instruction possible,” Arellano wrote in his Models of Excellence application.

## ‘Champions of Excellence’ Awards Ceremony Set for Nov. 16

The Palm Springs Unified School District Board of Education and Foundation of PSUSD will honor a Distinguished Citizen of the Year, three supporters of education and several PSUSD academy business partners at the Third Annual “Champions of Excellence” awards ceremony on Monday, Nov. 16 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Helene Galen Theatre at Rancho Mirage High School.

Jerry Fogelson will be honored as the Distinguished Citizen of the Year. Other nominees (to be announced) will include three Board of Education “Champions of Excellence” and business partners in the District’s high school career academies.

“This event recognizes the valuable contributions that individuals, businesses, teachers and administrators are making in our communities and within PSUSD,” said Foundation Executive Director Ellen Goodman. “It’s a way to thank and honor people who, by their

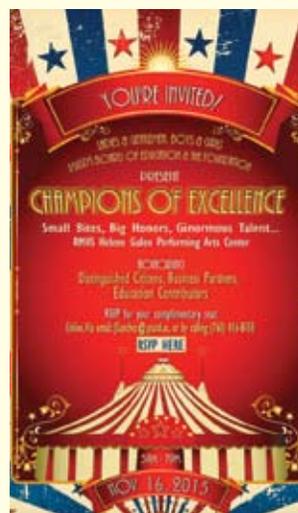
demonstrated commitment and example, inspire others to engage in volunteer and philanthropic service.”

Fogelson is being honored for launching and initially funding the GameOn initiative, through

the Fogelson Family Foundation, which brought the national Playworks program to Palm Springs Unified. Playworks was launched as a pilot at Cathedral City and Julius Corsini Elementary Schools in 2013 and last year expanded to Bella Vista Elementary Schools in Desert Hot Springs, Vista Del Monte

Elementary in Palm Springs and Della S. Lindley Elementary in Thousand Palms. This year, the program has expanded further to Agua Caliente, Rancho Mirage and Cielo Vista Charter Elementary Schools and serves about 5,000 children.

The event, which is free and open to the public, will include a festive pre-award reception and vocal, jazz and dramatic performances by some of the District’s students. In a special collaboration with the District’s CAFÉ Academy at Rancho Mirage High School, culinary students will be prepping and serving reception delicacies under the supervision of PSUSD’s Chef Howard Merrick and Palm Springs guest chef Bianca DeVries. A no-cost ticket is required to attend. To register visit <http://psusd.ticketleap.com/coe2015/>. For more information, contact Javier Sanchez at [jsanchez@psusd.us](mailto:jsanchez@psusd.us).



# District Digest



**Dedicating New Wenzlaff Education Center:** Palm Springs Unified School District officials, local elected representatives and members of the community recently gathered to dedicate the brand new Edward Wenzlaff Education Center at a ribbon-cutting ceremony in the school's multi-purpose room. The former Edward Wenzlaff Elementary School was completely renovated over the past year and a half

after the students of that school were moved to the new Bella Vista Elementary School on Avenida Jalisco. The Desert Hot Springs Alternative Center students were housed in a store front location in the Stater Bros shopping center on Palm Drive for 11 years before moving into the new Center in August. Cutting the ribbon is Board of Education member John Gerardi with, from left, Desert Hot Springs Mayor Adam Sanchez, Alternative Education Principal Dr. Milt Jones, Wenzlaff Assistant Principal Joddi DeMarco, State Allocation Board Executive Officer Lisa Silverman, County Supervisor John Benoit, two Wenzlaff ASB members and Board of Education members Shari Stewart and Richard Clapp.



**SCE Supports REAL:** The Renewal Energy Academy of Learning (REAL) at Desert Hot Springs High School recently received a \$10,000 grant from Southern California Edison as a further commitment to SCE's ongoing support of the program. REAL, which began at DHSHS eight years ago, provides its students with realistic workplace experience with college rigor and relevance. Students in the Academy for four years are ready for college, military service or employment in the green energy field. SCE's donation will fund materials, class trips and internship training not covered through existing funding. In addition to monetary donations, which total \$70,000 since the program's inception, SCE has contributed to REAL through providing field trips, equipment, classroom instruction and guest speakers. Presenting the check to SCE's Nena McCullough, second from left, bottom, are REAL students along with REAL Instructor Mike Phelan, left, and Desert Hot Springs High Work-Based Learning Coordinator John Mesicek, right.



of Cahuilla Indians Chair Jeff Grubbe, and Principal Guillermo Chavez, judged the amazing floats. The Juniors won first place in the float competition for their "Jurassic Park" entry. The parade included participation by all of CCHS' feeder elementary and middle schools, CCHS clubs, PSUSD Board of Education members and members of the Cathedral City City Council.

**Juniors Win CCHS Homecoming Float Competition:** Despite the very warm temperatures, the Lions' pride and spirit were fierce at this year's Cathedral High Homecoming Parade, themed "A New Dimension." It was all about sci-fi and fantasy cinema as the class floats reflected "Star Wars," "Jurassic Park," "Harry Potter" and "Back to the Future." Supt. of Schools Dr. Christine Anderson, Grand Marshal Agua Caliente Band



**Welcome New Teachers:** As we launched the 2015-16 school year with smaller class sizes across the District, PSUSD welcomed about 130 new teachers to the District family during orientation activities.



**Arts Coordinator Publishes Book On District Murals:** PSUSD's Arts Coordinator Louisa Castrodale, fourth from left, recently published a photo book documenting 60 of the more than 80 murals created by the 19 District artists-in-residence and District students, that are displayed at schools throughout the District. The murals were photographed by Artist-In Residence Ray Lindsey. Book proceeds will go toward PSUSD's arts programs. Castrodale, along with some of the contributing artists, from left, O'Jay Vanegas, Chester Sturgill, Sonia Dippner (mother of artists Alistair and Christopher Dippner), Bijan Masoumpaneh, Nazim Ozel, Luiz Castro and John Aaron Hansen, were recently on hand during a book-signing party at Trio Restaurant in Palm Springs. Books are on sale for \$25, and proceeds benefit District art programs. For more information or to order a book, call (760) 202-6488.

**PSUSD Staffer Named State Association Employee of Year:** Jared Andresen, a member of the Nutrition Services team at Rancho Mirage High School, was recently recognized at the 2015 School Nutrition Association (SNA) Annual National



Convention in Salt Lake City, for receiving the state SNA Employee of the Year award earlier this year. Recognizing Andresen is National SNA President Julia Bauscher from the Jefferson County School District in Louisville, KY.

## PSUSD Board of Education

Karen Cornett <i>President</i>	Shari Stewart <i>Clerk</i>
Richard Clapp	John Gerardi
	James Williamson

## PSUSD Administration

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

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**Student Board Members Take Oath:** The Board of Education recently welcomed its 2015-16 student Board members. Administering the oath of office is Supt. of Schools Dr. Christine Anderson as Board of Education President Karen Cornett looks on. Student board members taking the oath are, from left: Elizabeth Cole, Cathedral City High; Magali Figueroa, Desert Hot Springs High; Ivan Silva, Mount San Jacinto High; Yazmin Castillo, Palm Springs High; and Mariah Ferrer, Rancho Mirage High.



**PS Sun-Up Rotary Donates Backpacks for VDM Students:** The Palm Springs Sun-Up Rotary Club, Best, Best & Krieger, Walmart and other local sponsors recently joined forces to raise almost \$7,000 to purchase backpacks filled with school supplies for all first through fifth grade students at Vista del Monte Elementary School. Each student had the opportunity to pick their favorite backpack on the first day of school when Rotarians visited the school, above and below, to make the presentation.



**Assistance League Members Outfit PSUSD Students:** Assistance League® of Palm Springs Desert Area recently provided new school clothes to PSUSD elementary school students through its Operation School Bell® program. Clothing packages in backpacks for 796 PSUSD students were assembled by Assistance League volunteers and PSUSD community liaisons and then packed for shipping to the schools by warehouse personnel. The liaisons identify children with the greatest needs to receive the backpacks. From left, are: Barbara Petty and Terry Klein, of the District warehouse; Community Liaison Lorena Castaneda; Operation School Bell Co-Chair Tina Regan; Community Liaisons Lillian Torres, Emma-Nicole Villalobos and Roberta Viazcan; Operation School Bell Chair Jill Beighley; and Operation School Bell Co-Chair Elenore Hall. Assistance League of Palm Springs Desert Area is one of 120 chapters of Assistance League. The chapter started providing clothing to low income, at-risk children in the Coachella Valley in 1991. Since then, over 30,000 children have received new clothes. This year, the chapter will distribute clothing to 3,000 students attending 39 schools in the Coachella Valley.

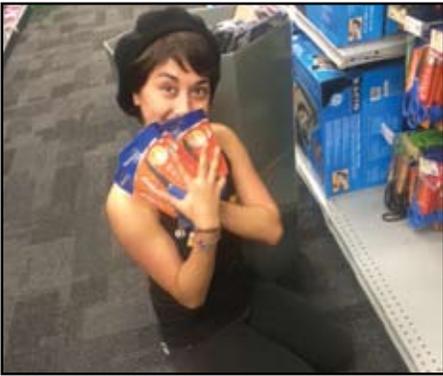
**Mobile Dairy Farm Visits Schools:** Students at some Palm Springs Unified Elementary schools no longer have to wonder what it's like to milk a cow, even if they haven't stepped foot on a farm. One of the five Dairy Council of California's Mobile Dairy Classrooms recently visited Agua Caliente, Bubbling Wells and Bella Vista Elementary schools where students got up close and personal with a live dairy cow and learned about the cow's anatomy, milk production, agriculture's role in supplying the foods children enjoy and dairy's contributions to a healthy diet. Six other elementary schools will be visited during this school year.



**Cahuilla Commemorates 'Patriot Day':** Cahuilla Elementary students and staff remembered those who lost their lives on Sept. 11 at the school's annual Patriot Day assembly. Organized by third grade teacher Pamela Gonzalez, second from right, the event included a presentation by the PS High School JROTC; patriotic sing-a-longs by Cahuilla students; speakers including local police officers and firefighters and Board of Education Member Richard Clapp about what Patriotism means to them; and a video starring Cahuilla students about the six pillars of character. Pictured from left, are Clapp, Cahuilla Principal Dr. Ryan Saunders, Palm Springs firefighters and event co-organizer Miche Guidry.



# Arts and Crafts Enrichment Expands in ASES



**Shopping for Supplies: Sofia Enriquez stocks up on needed supplies for ASES classes.**

The addition of Illustrator Sofia Enriquez to the Family YMCA family means new arts and crafts opportunities for students in the PSUSD After School Education and Safety (ASES) programs across the District.

Enriquez, who graduated from Otis Parsons in 2014 and has returned to the Coachella Valley, where she was raised, presents to elementary and middle school students in an attempt to take them out of their comfort zone to express their inner thoughts through creation. Her approach can be described as spontaneous and out of the ordinary, and she enjoys helping students create projects that are based on their own personal interests.

“I don’t want to be viewed as an art teacher who has students participate in a project that they might not want to do,” Enriquez said. “Instead, I am there to give them the tools to create what they want to create with some ideas and guidance.”

Enriquez, who has had her own works displayed at the Coachella Valley Art Scene at Marks Art Center at College of the Desert, admits that working with students has brought her out of her own comfort zone as well, but, along the way the experience is helping her to learn more about herself and what she wants to contribute to her community as an artists. She



**Emoji Art: Enriquez shows ASES students at Nellie N. Coffman Middle School how to make emoji wallets.**

is working closely with the YMCA ASES coordinator, Vivian Enriquez, who provides the ASES curriculum.

During the 2015-16 school year, Sofia will be working with students Cabot Yerxa, Cathedral City, Cielo Vista Charter, Rio Vista and Vista del Monte Elementary Schools; and Desert Springs, Nellie N. Coffman and James Workman Middle Schools. Projects will include: making books for national book month based on students’ reading interest, tie dye shirts; and Jackson Pollack art action painting created with a therapeutic purpose. She also has created recycled fabric patches for the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday, with the theme of what the kids wish for the world to be a better place.

## Message from the Superintendent

# First New State Assessment Results Should Not Be Compared to Others



Last spring, our District students joined their peers from across the state when they took the 2015 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), the new computer-based tests for English language arts/literacy and mathematics that replaced the former paper-based tests for these subjects. The District and individual school site results were recently released, and if you are a parent whose child took the CAASPP last spring, you should have received your student(s)’ individual results earlier this month as well.

These new exams are part of California’s comprehensive plan for supporting high-quality learning at every school. They are based on California’s new,

more challenging, academic standards, which are designed to help all students graduate from high school ready for college or career. These assessments ask students to explain how they solve problems, think critically, and write analytically. These are skills that take a good amount of time and effort to master, but they are essential tools for success beyond high school.

While some overall school results were higher than the county and/or state average scores, overall District results on the CAASP are not as strong as we would like. We want to make sure our parents understand that the new tests are too fundamentally different from the old exams to make reliable comparisons of scores. This year’s results establish a new baseline for the progress students are expected to make over time. Many students need to

make significant progress to reach the standards set for math and literacy that accompany college and career readiness. Over time, as our students experience multiple years of instruction related to the skills tested on the new assessments, results should show improved achievement. Schools will use the assessment results to help set learning goals for students as well as school programs

While we stress that these test results should not be compared with those in the past, we also realize that there is much work to do to ensure that the majority of our students reach the new proficiency levels established by our state. We have many programs, strategies and resources we have put in place through our Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) funding to address this goal. Some of

those actions include: new middle and high school math curriculum, reduced class sizes, additional instructional minutes at middle school, increased teacher collaboration time, middle school math coaches, a new math intervention program, full day kindergarten phase-in, extended summer school and additional professional development for our teachers.

As we move forward toward our quest for academic excellence for each of our nearly 24,000 students, I want to thank you, as always, for your time, interest and support of the Palm Springs Unified School District.

*Christine J. Anderson*

Christine J. Anderson, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools