

A supplement from the . . .



Palm Springs Unified School District

Serving Cathedral City, Desert Hot Springs, Palm Desert, Palm Springs, Rancho Mirage & Thousand Palms — Winter 2007-08

Bond Measure To Address District's Facility Needs

\$516 million in funding for school construction, upgrades and renovation

When Palm Springs Unified School District voters cast their ballots in the February 5, 2008 presidential primary election, they will also be presented with "Measure E," a District bond measure aimed at addressing many of the District's facility needs.

"The Palm Springs Unified School District strives to provide the absolute best education for the students in the District," said Superintendent Lorri McCune.

"Dedicated teachers, caring staff, involved parents and adequate school facilities all play an important role in maintaining student success," she said.

McCune said that as District enrollment continues to increase, many District schools are overcrowded, and new schools are needed. She said District schools have been well maintained over the years with many major renovations and improvements.

The District has been very successful in securing funding to aid in this process. To date, over \$45 million has been received from the State of California to help finance these renovations. However, additional classrooms and facilities need to be built to accommodate the District's increasing student population, which is now over 24,000 and is estimated to be at

30,000 by 2013. There are currently about 270 portable classrooms throughout the District.

Measure E is a \$516 million General Obligation bond program for the District. If passed, it will address many of the facility needs throughout the District. An overview of how the District will use the money can be seen in the graphic accompanying this article. Specific expenditures include:

- Upgrading and renovating existing schools which will include replacing outdated heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning systems (HVAC)
- Making health and safety upgrades, including handicap accessibility improvements and replacing fire alarm systems
- Constructing new schools to reduce student overcrowding
- Constructing permanent classrooms at the elementary schools to replace temporary portable classrooms

By law, Measure E has taxpayer protections in place. If Measure E is passed on February 5, 2008 the District must establish an independent citizens' oversight committee to review the expenditure of all Measure E bond funds.

Similar to a home loan, GO bonds are typically repaid over 30 years. The repayment comes from a tax on all taxable property—residential, commercial, agricultural and industrial—located in the District. The proposed bond measure would translate to about \$45 per \$100,000 of assessed property value. The median assessed value of homes within the District is \$227,000.

Measure E would provide students in the District with up-to-date classrooms and school facilities. In addition, it is expected to qualify the District for approximately \$125 million in State-matching grants to help finance the proposed projects.

Information on the Bond election, the proposed facilities projects and the tax repayment for the bond will all be included in your voter pamphlet.

For more information, call Assistant Superintendent of Business Services Jim Novak at 416-6126.



BLAST FROM THE PAST! Palm Springs High School freshmen took a creative cue from the 1960s for their homecoming parade float. PSHS Principal Ricky Wright was chosen as Grand Marshall for the parade, which featured 58 entries. *More District happenings on page 3.*

PSUSD Attendance Model Gains National Attention

Palm Springs Unified School District administrators recently shared their four-tier approach to improving school attendance at a national truancy conference held in Palm Springs last month.

The invitation to present the workshop at the conference, co-sponsored by the National Truancy Prevention Association (NTPA) and California Association of Supervisors of Child Welfare and Attendance (CASCWA), came after Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Personnel Services Dr. Craig Borba, who is a member of the State Attendance Review Board (SARB), shared with that board the progress made in PSUSD in boosting attendance rates.

With a full workshop room of more than 40 attendees, Superintendent Dr. Lorri McCune opened the presentation explaining the four-tier program. It includes: formalizing attendance as a key District goal, establishing attendance incentive programs, implementing a comprehensive community aide program and leveraging the legal system.

"We first had a discussion in Cabinet about how to increase our attendance," McCune said. "Then we talked to principals about what they needed to help them attain this goal. We re-emphasized that attendance would be our focus."

District principals were informed that they would be held accountable for student attendance. Students must attend school in order to improve achievement. Assistant Superintendent of Business Services Jim Novak told attendees some of the statistics he shared with principals including:

- Six percent of District students miss school on an average day;
- The District loses about \$26 per day for each absent student; and
- District-wide attendance rate dropped to 94.06 percent in 2003-04 from

94.51 percent in 2002-03 resulting in a state revenue loss of over \$435,000.

Last year the District had over 231,000 total student absences, equating to more than \$6 million in lost revenue to the District.

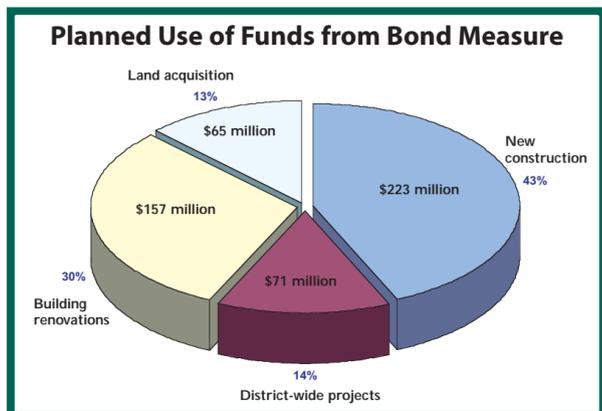
Novak outlined the 2004-05 pilot year of the District's Attendance Bonus Program which included a bonus of unrestricted funds to schools that showed an increase in the average of the last three years attendance rate. The amount of the bonus depended upon the amount of increased attendance. Bonus amounts ranged from \$875 to \$2,600 based upon enrollment and percentage of increased attendance.

The goal for 2006-07 was two-fold. Schools received a flat \$2,500 for meeting the District attendance goal as well as the enrollment and percentage increase for raising attendance at least .10% over the previous three-year average. Total bonuses were \$25,925 for 2005-06. Last year, bonuses totaled \$47,600 to the schools and increased district average from 93.6 percent to 94.61 percent. Eight schools met the District goal in 2005-06 and 2006-07. A total of 17 schools increased attendance at least .10 percent over the 3-year average.

The attendance goals for 2007-08 are 95.5 percent for elementary, 95 percent for middle

(Cont'd on page 4)

Innovative ideas implemented, including bonuses for schools showing improvement.



Calendar Change Delayed

District Seeking to Alleviate Concerns of Parents

A proposal to move the Palm Springs Unified elementary and middle schools to a modified calendar has been postponed in order to explore the issues further and attempt to alleviate some of the concerns that have been brought forward by some parents.

Superintendent Dr. Lorri McCune recently reported to the Board of Education that administration would be spending the next several months studying a proposed Modified Calendar for District elementary and middle schools prior to making a recommendation to the Board on a plan.

Responding to both parent and staff surveys indicating concerns including summer heat, child care, summer work schedules and varied schedule with the District high schools, McCune recommended to Board members that no action be taken to move the proposal forward for the 2008-09 school year. She added that the plan is to bring together a committee comprised of administrators, teachers, community members and those with experience implementing similar plans in other Districts to see if the issues can be addressed before making

a recommendation on whether to move forward for the 2009-10 school year.

"Our intent is to improve academic achievement for our students," said McCune adding that reasons for the proposal include:

- The opportunity to provide targeted interventions for students throughout the school year during intersessions;
- Ability to provide professional development for teachers throughout the school year;
- Reducing the lapse in language acquisition and retention for English Learners during the longer summer break; and
- Providing teachers with breaks throughout the year to reduce burnout and fatigue.

The proposal could mean a calendar with about 60 days in school followed by about 20 days off. Other options including a modified traditional calendar will also be studied. Both the Palm Springs Teachers Association and Teamsters unions will be involved in the discussions as well, since school calendars are negotiated items.

A survey of over 8,800 affected parents netted a return of just 13 percent. Of the returned surveys, about 67 percent said they were against the proposal, 21 percent were in favor and 12 percent felt they needed more information.

McCune said she was disappointed with the rate of return but appreciated the feedback received.

"The school system is stronger when we have parent involvement," said McCune. "We definitely want to address the concerns. It's important, however, that we hear from more than 13 percent of affected families."

Of the 561 staff members who responded to their survey, 60 percent are in support of the proposal, 30 percent are opposed and 10 percent have no opinion at this time.

The study committee will be formed and begin meeting within the next few weeks. The group will bring forward their recommendations to District administration. Prior to a proposal being brought before the Board of Education, meetings will be held at various locations in the District to provide information and receive feedback from parents and community members.

Anyone with questions or comments on the Modified Calendar proposal or an interest in serving on the study committee, should e-mail info@psusd.us or call 416-6055.

"Our intent is to improve academic achievement for our students"...Lorri McCune



Child Welfare & Attendance Director Jane Mills explains the community aide program to workshop attendees.

Seeks More Resources, Including for Technology, Arts District Creates Foundation

"The Foundation of Palm Springs Unified School District" is officially up and running, and the organization's first Board of Directors will soon be in place.

The Foundation, under the purview of Assistant Superintendent of Innovation Research and Educational Development (IRED) Dr. Lorraine Becker, has been formed to provide additional resources, such as mentoring, work job shadowing and financial support to the District's technology and fine arts programs and career pathways academies.

The Foundation's Articles of Incorporation have been filed. A steering committee comprised of various district and community representatives has established the organization's bylaws and criteria for Board members.

Criteria for potential Board candidates fall into one or more of these areas:

- Influence and access to people in the corporate/business community;
- Possession of skills to help solidify the new Foundation;
- Financial resources (either their own or ability to mobilize sizable donations from others); and
- Commitment to the Foundation's cause.

Foundation board members will be considered following review of a written nomination.

For a nomination form or more information, contact Theresa O'Dell in the IRED office at 416-6118.

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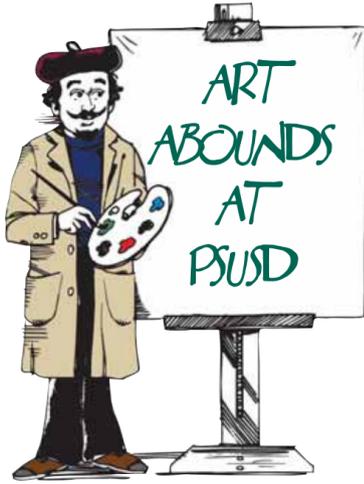
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District Digest

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Laptops for Students

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The passion and persistence of Palm Springs Unified School District's new Visual & Performing Arts Specialist has become apparent after only a couple of months on the job. She has already initiated numerous programs and projects and many more are in the planning stages.

Louisa Castrodale, who most recently was a third grade teacher at Cielo Vista Elementary School, comes to her new assignment with a background in both the arts and teaching. She has an associates degree in interior design, bachelors in history and a masters in education. She has been an elementary classroom teacher for the past 14 years. During this time, she gained experience in implementing new programs at school sites, writing grants and working with community partners.

In this new role, Castrodale has several key objectives. At the elementary level, the concentration is on adopting a fine arts curriculum for the K-5 classrooms. She is also developing pilot programs with both the Palm Springs Art

New Programs and Projects Already Under Way

District Creates Position to Lead Arts

Museum and the McCallum Theater, which will begin later in the school year.

Several new projects already under way including the construction of three Poet Trees, a monthly elementary art gallery program with the Palm Springs Library (see story *this page*), a poetry reading with Rancho Mirage Library and submission of student art to the Library's Juried Art Show now on display through the end of the year.

Of the 47 entries submitted for the Rancho Mirage Library show by high school students in the district, eight were accepted. Cathedral City High School student Jose Villanueva took third place in the show and won \$250.

Castrodale is also working on a series of special events in conjunction with the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum.

At the secondary level, Castrodale is focusing on bringing in new programs and special events to the campuses. The Palm Springs Film Festival is offering a series of films and speakers to all of the high schools this year. Several mural projects are presently in development at both the high school and middle school levels.

Two new offerings for this year include a traveling art show, with the presentation of original works and their artists by IncredibleArtist.Com earlier this month (see story *on this page*) and a slide show and question and answer session with the legendary architectural photographer Julius Shulman in January.

Castrodale is also working with the Palm Springs Opera Guild to expand its educational outreach to deliver programs to all District schools this year.

In addition to broadening the arts experiences at all grade levels, Castrodale is also working on building community partnerships.

"Already, business partners such as Koffi, Dunn-Edwards and Brithinee Electric, as well as private donors like Alibaba Farzaneh have stepped in to offer support to the educational process," Castrodale said. "We look forward to continued involvement on the part of the

community in the District's efforts to provide our children with the most excellent possible education."

Anyone wanting to assist with arts opportunities for students can contact Castrodale at 219-7851 or e-mail lcastrdale@psusd.us.



PSUSD's new Visual & Performing Arts Specialist Louisa Castrodale shows off some of the art work by Palm Springs High School students that was submitted to the Rancho Mirage Library's Juried Art Show. She's holding "Music Is Love" by Taija Gauthier. The others are, from left, "E=mc²" by Marilyn Crandall; "What A Horrible Thing Yellow Is" by Aaron Davis and "Milk Does A Body Good" by Jacob Been.

Students Get Up Close and Personal with Artists

Louisa Castrodale saw Vernon Finney's "Reach" painting and inquired about how she might be able to get copies for local schools. IncredibleArtist.Com owner Rick Pantele offered to take the "show on road" and bring more than just the requested reproduction.

Artists from The IncredibleArtist.Com Gallery visited six schools in Palm Springs and Cathedral City last month to give students a personal experience with fine art.

Christopher Dailey, 22, a Rancho Mirage resident, had his first sold-out show at age 11. He talked to students about two of his most popular works, "The Nile" and "The Shadow Self".

"We hid from ourselves the truths that we see," said Dailey in describing "The Shadow Self" to advanced art students at Cathedral City High School. "This piece is a fun psychological test for me. Art is a wonderful way to interact with people."

Dailey is currently working on an 8-foot square painting called "Overcomer," based on the view from the top of Mount San Jacinto. The painting is a full-size male figure removing a blindfold.

"The significance is when you remove your blindfold you may find you may have already climbed your mountain," said Dailey.

He is creating the piece for the window of The IncredibleArtist.Com Gallery, located at 333 N Palm Canyon Drive, Suite 101A at Amado near the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

Young artist Tony Alexander Garcia (who goes by the name "Tag"), 27, recently graduated from College of the Desert. Garcia said she was originally a pre-law student but

wasn't happy with her choice until she went back to school to pursue the study of art history. Garcia showed students three of her pieces including "The Gambler" (aka "Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is") and a painting of Marilyn Monroe created in four days using her lips to print on the canvas.

Master Artist Vernon Finney, 83, showed and talked about two of his masterpieces, "Reach" and "The Creator". A resident of Palm Springs, Finney has been painting for over 60 years, with over 250 works in his portfolio.

"Art is an interpretation of your own soul. Nature is a part of my philosophy and my art," said Finney who produced the 10 by 7 foot oil on canvas. "Gallery owner Pantele reproduced "Reach" as a limited edition Fine Art Giclee in multiple sizes. He presents them to people throughout the country who have struggled with loss and tragedy.

"Everyone I knew had not reached their potential," said Finney about creating "Reach," which depicts thousands of hands pulling in several directions. "We let people draw us back from who we really are. It is aimed at giving people hope."

The IncredibleArtist.Com tour visited Ramon Alternative Center, Raymond Cree

Middle School and Palm Springs High School in Palm Springs; and James Workman Middle School, Mount San Jacinto High and Cathedral City High in Cathedral City. Pantele presented each of the schools with a 36" by 28" reproduction of "Reach."

The gallery owner's advice for budding artists is: "If you have to work while you're studying art, work in the art business," Pantele said. "Always cherish your sketches, all of them. They are very important."

Sponsors for the school tour included: ImagineIT Media, U-Haul of Cathedral City, Magie Ristorante, Raphael's Salon & French Cafe, Jack's Fine Art & Framing, Palm Desert National Bank, FinalImage.biz, and local entrepreneur Richard Hauke.

The IncredibleArtist.Com Gallery is unique. It specializes in local emerging artists. Slideshows on the wall inside and the sidewalk outside highlight the artwork. Artists are in attendance most nights to meet visitors, who can watch an artist at work in the window painting a new piece. For more information, call 325-5917, e-mail info@incredibleartist.com, or visit the web at www.IncredibleArtist.com.

Library Showcases Young Local Artists

In support of local young budding artists, the Palm Springs Public Library is partnering with local elementary schools to present a Kid's Art Gallery this year. Each month a different school's student art work is on display at the Library.

To kick-off each month's exhibit, a Gallery Opening event is held in the Youth Story Room. Parents, friends and the community are invited to view the student artwork and enjoy some light refreshments at the beginning of the month. After the opening, the art remains on display throughout the month in the main Youth room at the Library.

The program began in October when the Library showcased art from students of St. Theresa's. Last month, the artwork of Cielo Vista Elementary students was showcased. Thirty pieces of art were submitted for the exhibit.

Due to the holidays and school closures, the program will take a hiatus for the months of December and January. The program will start up again in February featuring the artwork of students from Katherine Finch Elementary.

"This is a great opportunity for the Library and the Schools to partner together," said Sharon Snow, Palm Springs Library Youth Services Supervisor. "It gives families an opportunity to come to the Library together and see what we're all about!"

The Palm Springs Library offers many programs and tools for students and families. Live Homework Help®, a real-time, online tutoring service, is available free to any student 4th grade through second year of college with a Palm Springs Library card. There are also weekly pre-school and toddler story times; Youth, Tween and Teen programming; Summer Reading; Computer research, and much more.

The Palm Springs Public Library is located at 300 S. Sunrise Way in Palm Springs. Call 760-322-READ or go online at www.palmspringslibrary.org for more information.



"Incredible Artists," standing, left to right, Vernon Finney, Tony "Tag" Garcia and Christopher Dailey, address Advanced Art students at Cathedral City High.

Message from the Superintendent

Bond Funds Linked to Learning

There are so many things to be proud of in the Palm Springs Unified School District, not the least of which is a team of professionals dedicated to provide all of our nearly 24,000 students with an excellent education.



Our instructional team of administrators, teachers and all of those who directly support them are focused intently on delivering the curriculum and providing the tools for our students acquire the skills necessary for academic success. At the same time, we also have a cadre of staff who work tirelessly each and every day to keep our 25 campuses safe, clean and aesthetically pleasing so our students have environments most conducive to learning.

Our facilities are another area of pride. We currently face a student population that has grown more quickly than we've been able to build new schools in which to educate them. As a temporary measure, we've added around 270 portable classrooms across the District. The facilities are adequate spaces for learning, but they are definitely not optimal for learning.

In order for Palm Springs Unified School District to provide our students with the best possible facilities in which to learn, we need to build several new schools and some of our older schools. Infrastructure improvements are needed across the District. Due to our projected growth, we must purchase land for schools we need within the next several years. Measure E will be on the February 5, 2008 presidential primary ballot (see story page

1). We urge you to become fully informed on Measure E. We are appreciative of the support we receive from our parents, business representatives and the entire community. Our past bond measures allowed the District to construct, modernize and renovate many facilities throughout the District. There is more to do! Measure E will allow us to continue the District's quest for excellence in education for all of our students. Thank you for your past, present and future support of our children. If you have any suggestions or questions at any time, please don't hesitate to call my office at 416-6003 or e-mail lmccune@psusd.us.

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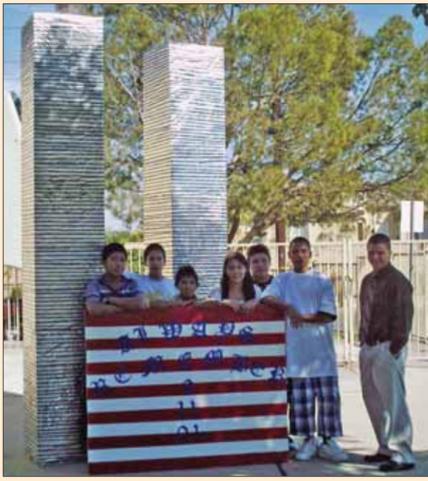
Lorri S. McCune

Lorri S. McCune, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools



A NEW WAY: PSUSD kicked off its new school year with a presentation by Lan Jukes, above, who told teachers they need to change the way they teach to best serve today's "digital kids."

District Digest



MATH COMES ALIVE: Nellie N. Coffman Middle School Eighth Grade Math Teacher John Stevens worked with his students to help them realize through math the reality of the collapse of the World Trade Center and events relating to 9/11/01. After an overview of the attacks, they discussed the square footage of the towers, and the key elements of the bombings in relation to rates and ratios, area and measurements. For context, they compared these to the area of a typical house. The students then determined the amount of damage—figuring out how fast the towers fell—and conceptualized the impact. They also calculated how much money the towers' leasing company would be losing if they were still paying on a 99-year lease plus how many people would be at work on each floor to ensure proper equity. At the end of the lesson, students discussed not only their findings, but their feelings as well. The project culminated with an optional after-school project in which participating students built an 11-foot scale model of the towers using what they learned in the math lesson. Pictured, left to right, are students Filiberto Lazaro, Misael Valle, Jaime Lezama Vasquez, Marimar Carrillo, Houston Verduzco and Jose Rangel, and instructor John Stevens.

CHAMBER HONORS

TEACHERS: The Cathedral City Chamber of Commerce recently honored the Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage and Thousand Palms Teachers of the Year at its monthly breakfast.



Debra Ahlers, chair of the Chamber's Education Committee, left, and Larry David, of Forest Lawn, right, sponsors of the breakfast, helped present the awards to honorees from left, Dion Libutti, James Workman Middle; Sue Patterson, Rancho Mirage Elementary; Judith Urrutia, Della S. Lindley Elementary; Michelle Zahariades, Sunny Sands Elementary; Gregory Whitmore, Cathedral City High; Lynne Hodges, alternative education; Ann Wright, Cathedral City Elementary; Teresa Jacobson, Rio Vista Elementary; Daniel Carroll, Agua Caliente Elementary; and Marilyn Fritz, Landau Elementary.



BUSY MARINE ROTC UNIT: The Marine Jr. ROTC cadets from Desert Hot Springs High have been very busy drilling, marching and studying. After a morning full of activity, the group took a little break to visit

the Palm Springs Air Museum. Also this month, the cadets participated in the 232nd Marine Corps birthday celebration at Miracle Springs Resort in Desert Hot Springs. Cutting the birthday cake are Senior Marine Instructor Lt. Col. Carl Lewke, center right, and Marine Instructor Master Sergeant Mark Coates, center left.

PSHS Money Management Program Lauded by State



O'Connell

to promote financial literacy among California students.

"This program has a great reputation throughout the state," O'Connell told some of the students in Brooks Young's "Virtual Enterprise" portion of the Academy. "You should be very proud."

Following the visit to Young's class, O'Connell led a press conference at which he further praised the Palm Springs High Academy, which is one of 280 California Partnership Academies (CPAs). These CPAs are small learning communities that work in partnership with the business community, labor and higher education to provide students with both rigorous academics and a career focus.

Palm Springs Unified Superintendent Dr. Lorri McCune introduced O'Connell and added her praise for the MMMA.

"This program is a real world learning opportunity integrating career tech with core academic courses," McCune said. "I applaud all of your efforts."

"You really do have a model program here," O'Connell told members of the

press as well as district administrators and MMMA business partners in attendance. "It's one we hope we can replicate across the state. It's all about rigor, relevance and relationships."

Dr. Diana Verney, district coordinator of Career Technical Education, thanked the business partners in attendance.

"Without this collaboration, we couldn't have our students in local banks," Verney said. "Career Pathways is about connecting business to the classrooms. We can't do it without our business partners." Business partners in attendance included representatives from Wells Fargo and Union Bank.

O'Connell discussed the importance of wise money management and promoted the resources on the California Department of Education website that can be used by teachers, students and parents to improve their financial management skills and knowledge. The website is at www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/INV.

"We hope teachers, the business community and parents will utilize these resources," O'Connell said. "There are links to tools that promote literacy at the elementary, middle and high school levels."

O'Connell also encouraged the business representatives to provide feedback and input to state educators.

McCune also thanked the business partners for their participation and input.

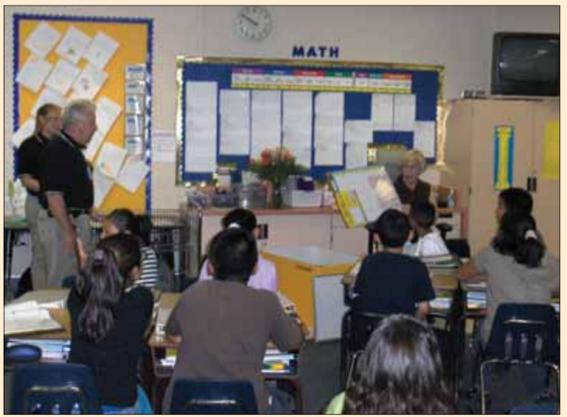
"The coaching and mentoring that you provide for the students is huge," she said. "Your excitement for the program will be contagious."



HOMECOMING ROCKS: Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage and Thousand Palms schools participated in Cathedral City High's Second Annual Homecoming Parade, themed "Rockin' Through the Decades." Each float/group represented music and pop culture from the '50s, '60s, '70s or '80s. Superintendent Dr. Lorri McCune, Board of Education members and Cathedral City council members rode in the parade as well. Grand Marshall was Joseph Velasquez, owner of Cathedral Mason & Concrete. The parade was followed by a pep rally at the Cathedral City Civic Center, above.

OFFICE MAX "ADOPTS"

BUBBLING WELLS TEACHER: Bubbling Wells Assistant Principal Debbie Paneris was thrilled to learn that Office Max officials agreed with her nomination of Bubbling Wells teacher Karen Shelby, seated in front of room, for the company's "Adopt A Classroom" honors.



Officials from the Palm Springs Office Max store, including Store Manager Gary Chain, left, surprised Shelby in her classroom last month with delivery and presentation of over \$1,400 worth of office supplies.



ROTARY CLUB PRESENTS BACKPACKS, DICTIONARIES

Members of the Palm Springs noon Rotary club visited its adopted school, Cahuilla Elementary, recently to present about 250 backpacks filled with school supplies to the school's second and third graders. Principal Brette MacLean called the classes to the stage to pick up their goodies. The Rotarians returned a few weeks later to present dictionaries to the principals of Cahuilla, Katherine Finchy and Vista del Monte for those school's third graders as part of the regional Rotary clubs' annual project.

WHATEVER IT TAKES: The administrative and teaching staff at Desert Springs Middle School kicked off the new school year with t-shirts sporting the team's motto: "Whatever...it takes for students to succeed at DSMS." Modeling the new shirts are the school's administrators (l-r) Assistant Principal Patty Piñon, Principal Ryan Saunders, Assistant Principal Patricia Merriam, Dean Jason Mix and Assistant Principal Cheryl Alva Desouza.



RECOGNIZING PROGRESS: Staff members of the 11 District schools that made the state's Academic Performance Index (API) target on last spring's STAR tests were recently presented with an achievement flag and celebratory cake from Superintendent Dr. Lorri McCune and Cabinet members. Principals of those schools were also honored by the Board of Education at a recent meeting. Pictured immediately below (l-r), are Agua Caliente Principal Lucy Medina (709), Cahuilla Elementary Principal Brette MacLean (762), Bubbling Wells Elementary Principal Steve Marlatt (674), Cathedral City Elementary Principal Tony Signoret (731), and Rio Vista Elementary Principal Cheryl James (826). Pictured at bottom (l-r), are Board of Education Clerk Shari Stewart, Sunny Sands Principal Karen Cornett (API Index of 796), Rancho Mirage Elementary Principal Susie Morrison (805), Two Bunch Palms Elementary Principal Arlan Anderson (657), Nellie N. Coffman Middle Principal Terri Simon (645) Raymond Cree Middle Assistant Principals Lisa Arseo and Julio Omier and Superintendent Dr. Lorri McCune.



District Launches Pilot '24/7' Laptop Program

Take a look in the classrooms of more than 500 District students who have their assigned laptop on their desk, and you'll see engagement and motivation in action.

The District's pilot "24/7" laptop program is up and running. All fourth and fifth graders at Cathedral City Elementary School, three classes at Cielo Vista Elementary, two classes at Bubbling Wells Elementary and 100 freshmen at Cathedral City High picked up their new learning tools as the new year began. Teachers and principals are already reporting great success stories.

Staff and parents are amazed at how quickly the kids have become the 'experts,' said Jennifer Liebertz, one of the 24/7 teachers at Cielo Vista Elementary. "I noticed that my students have become critical thinkers and problem solvers. Instead of running to me for help, I see a little group of kids huddled around a computer working it out for themselves."

24/7 refers to students having access to their laptop computer 24 hours per day, seven days a week. The program was rolled out at an information session at each school. Parents filled out paperwork relating to use of the laptops, insurance, and expectations of the students and parents. Later, they came to the school to receive their computer and an orientation.

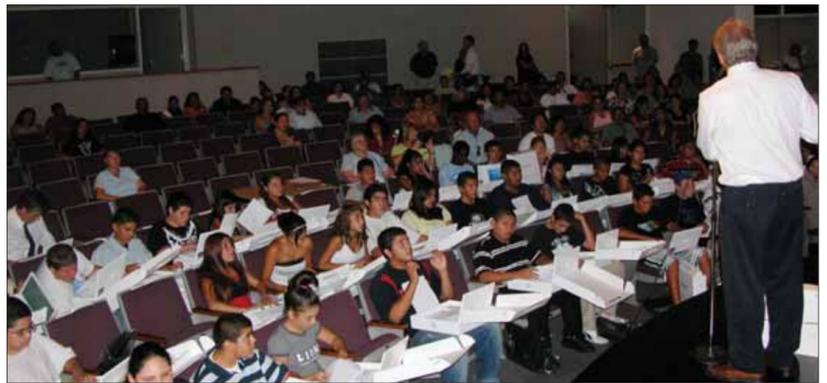
The pilot program addresses how teaching and learning changes with technology, said Dr. Lorri McCune, PSUSD superintendent. Principals and teachers participating in this year report that their 24/7 students are motivated and highly engaged in learning.

"24/7 has increased student interest and allowed teachers to develop lessons that are more global and based on higher levels of learning," said Bubbling Wells Principal Steve Marlatt. "Students are experiencing a greater depth of knowledge and applying concepts learned."

Teachers are very excited about all the progress students are making, added Cielo Vista 24/7 teacher Cindy Bellamy.

"We can't seem to keep up with how quickly the students are learning the programs and functions of the laptop!" said Bellamy. "Students are truly engaged in their learning and excited about writing and especially science. The 24/7 program is proving to be invaluable especially with our English Learner population. The instant feedback they receive and the research they are doing really contributes to expanding their vocabulary and English skills. I can't imagine teaching any other way!"

Teachers report that being a part of the 24/7 program has completely changed the way



Cathedral City High Vice Principal Brad Bryeans, talks to students about their new laptop computers, provided through a special pilot program called "24/7."

they teach," said Tony Signoret, Cathedral City Elementary principal. "They also say they cannot imagine going back to teaching the way they did before. Students are begging for more laptop time. Already they are taking their computers home Mondays through Thursdays, and parents are reporting a spiked increase in their children's interest in school. Kids are coming home eager to complete their assignments on their laptops."

The laptops cost about \$1,400 per student, and are funded by the participating schools.

The District's goal is to expand the program each year until every student has a laptop to use 24/7.

"We wish we could afford to give every student a laptop right now," said McCune adding that one of the goals of the District's new "Foundation of the Palm Springs Unified School District" is to seek out and secure additional donations for the program.

For more information or to make a donation to the 24/7 program, call Dr. Lorraine Becker at 416-6118.

'Harvest of the Month' Comes to District

Studies show that healthy eating and daily physical activity have a profound impact on the body and mind by improving the ability to learn and comprehend, boosting energy, improving school attendance and changing attitudes and behavior.

Palm Springs Unified is participating in "Harvest of the Month," a program that provides materials and resources to support healthy food choices through increased access and consumption of fruits and vegetables as well as the encouragement of daily physical activity.

The program supports core curricular areas through exploration and study and presents a strategic opportunity to bring together the classroom, cafeteria, home and community to promote a common goal and healthier habits for students.

The objectives of Harvest of the Month are for students to increase their:

- Access to fruits and vegetables through school meal programs, classrooms, school gar-

dens, farmers' markets, grocery stores, community gardens, etc.;

- Preference for selected produce items through classroom activities, such as taste testing, cooking in class and school garden activities, and through menu offerings in the school meals program;
- Participation in daily physical activity and understanding of why it is important; and
- Knowledge of and familiarity with California grown fruits and vegetables and the rich agricultural bounty of the State.

Harvest of the Month is comprised of four key monthly elements—educator newsletters, family newsletters, menu slicks and press releases.

Educator newsletters are provided to all District teachers, parent newsletters are posted on the District's web site—www.psusd.us—and the menu slicks are posted in each cafeteria.



Produce is featured monthly as follows:

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| September | Apples |
| October | Pears |
| November | Kiwi |
| December | Sweet Potatoes |
| January | Oranges |
| February | Broccoli |
| March | Spinach |
| April | Carrots |
| May | Strawberries |
| June | Salad Greens |

For more information, visit www.harvestofthemonth.com or call the District's Food Services Department at 416-8351.

One of 1,000 Worldwide

Apple Names CCHS Teacher Distinguished Educator

Matt Cauthron, one of two teachers at Cathedral City High School teaching in the Digital Arts Technology Academy (DATA), has become one of only 1,000 educators worldwide named an Apple Distinguished Educator. As such, Cauthron presents at a variety of conferences across the country.

As Cathedral City High School and Palm Springs Unified embark on the Apple 24/7 instructional program being piloted this year with 100 students at Cathedral City High and several classes at three elementary schools, Cauthron will be an asset to the students who enroll in both the DATA academy and the Apple 24/7 program.

The 24/7 program will provide students in the pilot with laptop computers 24 hours a day, seven days a week as an instructional tool. The goal is to expand the program each year until every student in the District has possession of a leased laptop computer throughout the school year.

Cauthron received his bachelors degree in art emphasizing photography from University of California Santa Cruz. He continued his education at UC Riverside, the Digital Media Academy at Stanford University, and received his masters degree in Curriculum and Instruction through Chapman University. He is also an instructor at the College of the Desert. Before entering the teaching profession in 1999, Cauthron worked with galleries throughout California as well as image and artwork reproduction for artists and photographers.

For more information on Cauthron and the DATA academy, access <http://www.digitalartstechacademy.us/site/cauthron.html>.

Architecture Pathway Also Offered

In addition to the DATA academy, Cathedral City High also offers the Architecture, Construction, and Engineering (A.C.E.) pathway, which provides students with training in drafting and architecture design.

Students enroll in a sequence of classes beginning in their freshman year that culminates in their senior year. In addition to completing courses in basic drafting, students complete coursework in AutoCAD, Architectural Desktop, and 3-D software and design. These courses articulate directly with the College of the Desert where students can continue their education and obtain an associates degree.

The students in the A.C.E. pathway participate in the Coachella Valley A.C.E. mentor program, attend field trips, and compete in local drafting and architecture events.

For further information on the A.C.E. career pathway, contact the District through instructor, Veronica Moreno-Nicholas, at vnicholas@psusd.us or Dr. Diana Verney, Career Technical Education coordinator at dverney@psusd.us.

Program improves student attendance

(Cont'd from page 1)

and 94.5 percent for high school and will increase another .5 percent in 2008-09.

Since 2001-02, elementary attendance has increased .85 percent, middle school .80 percent and high school .46 percent – equating to about \$500,000 in increased revenue to the District.

Director of Child Welfare & Attendance Jane Mills discussed the community aide aspect of the attendance improvement plan. She explained that the District added eight full-time community aides to the existing two in January of this year. The aides received extensive training before heading out into the community to bring habitual truants back to school.

Organized into three geographic teams, the aides operate in two shifts. They identify point people at sites for them to interact with regarding attendance issues, hold a team meeting each day, use the student information system to identify students with attendance problems and then proactively make contact with the families of those students.

In the first five months of the program, 10 aides made about 1,800 visits to deliver free and reduced lunch applications and/or verify addresses, and an additional 4,160 initial contacts were made regarding attendance issues. The efforts resulted in a total of 1,418 students with improved attendance raising the average attendance rate of these students from 85.58 percent prior to initial contact to 93.98 percent after initial contact. There were 4,350 approximate reclaimed attendance days netting \$132,588.

Mills noted some of the barriers to school attendance identified by the community aides including: health issues and access to healthcare; mental health issues such as grief, depression, school phobia and parental mental health; social problems at school creating fear and discomfort; credit deficiency and/or a lack of academic success in school; child-care; family travel to Mexico; substance abuse; delinquency; divorce, dysfunction, lack of resources or legal problems; parenting issues, transportation; and grandparents raising children.

Mike Wong, Student Assistance Program coordinator, discussed the fourth tier to the approach, which focuses on leveraging the legal system when other methods of intervening fail.

Students are identified as habitually truant through the student information system and/or site referrals. The families of these students receive a letter to attend a large group district attorney mediation meeting in an effort to educate them on the Compulsory Education law, and, at the same time school level intervention teams are documenting and reviewing the cases.

If these efforts are not effective, students are referred to one of three District School Attendance Review Boards (SARBs), which includes representatives from community agencies who can often help with intervention.

The District and SARB work collaboratively with the District Attorney's office on family mediation and decide at what point to file legal action, resulting in fines for parents who refuse to comply with the law.



The principals of District schools that made attendance goals for the 2006-07 school year showed off their "big checks" at the District Welcome Back at Palm Springs High School in September.

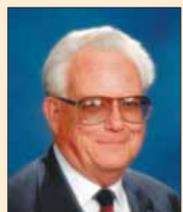


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