

**FREE**

# School News



*Education + Communication = A Better Nation*

**Covering the Los Alamitos Unified School District  
and the communities of Los Alamitos, Rossmoor, Seal Beach and Sunset Beach**

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DECEMBER 2012 / JANUARY 2013

## The Four As: Academics, Athletics, Activities, and the Arts



**Dr. Sherry Kropp**  
Superintendent

Together, we can continue to “Ignite Unlimited Possibilities for Students” by continuing to prioritize academics, athletics, activities, and the arts across the district, at all schools and at all levels.

As a unified school district, we have the distinct advantage of creating programs and practices preschool through high school. Our teachers and support staff are able to create schools that build on one another to provide the very best opportunities for students. Los Alamitos Unified School District is known for high achievement in academics, and we are very proud of this accomplishment. Our district Academic Performance Index (API) rose to 919, up eight points from last year, and far surpassed the state’s goal of 800. Los Alamitos High School recently received recognition from the College Board for increasing access to and passing rates on Advanced Placement exams. Over 97 percent of all tenth-graders pass the California High School Exit Exam on their first attempt. In virtually every measure of academic progress, Los Al is outstanding. Much of this success can be attributed to our teachers, preschool through high school, because they work together to ensure that the curriculum is articulated and coordinated and that best instructional practices are shared throughout the district.

SEE SUPERINTENDENT • PAGE 11



LAUSD has 23 athletic programs and support nontraditional programs, such as roller hockey and crew.

## Dedicated to Students



**Meg Cutuli**  
President

Erin Kominsky, the principal at Weaver Elementary School, has just recently returned from her exciting trip to Washington D.C., where she was honored as California’s National Elementary School Principal. Mrs. Kominsky said that the experience was a humbling one, and she felt truly privileged to be there. She also shared that her colleagues and the entire staff at Weaver deserve the award and recognition. There are approximately 3,000 elementary schools in California, so to be our state’s representative is really impressive.

Mrs. Kominsky began this journey when she was nominated. She doesn’t know who presented her for nomination, but when you consider the number of staff members, parents, and visitors who come to Weaver each year to see the amazing instruction that goes on daily, the list of potential nominators becomes quite long. She then received an application and was asked to write five essays. The topics involved management and leadership, supporting all students, involving parents and community, and advancing positive school climate. The final question was to name the five best practices at the school site. Two of those practices,

Cognitive Guided Instruction (CGI) and Math Intelligence Neuro Development (MIND), are math programs that all of our elementary schools use.

Mrs. Kominsky’s days in Washington D.C. went by quickly. The group was given tours of the capitol and had many planned activities. Each principal was unique, coming from a different area and a different background, but they were all amazing. The principals all had stories to tell and were given two minutes to share them with the entire group. Mrs. Kominsky said that one common thread from all the stories was the conviction and courage each principal had and the burning passion to do this work for students. The dedication to the success of every child was evident in all of their stories.

Mrs. Kominsky said that expectations for our students will be even higher in the future. Common Core Standards will become part of our curriculum in a few years. One of the benefits of having national educational standards will be that our educational leaders will now have a common language to discuss the best methods to support and deliver these standards. The memorization of facts will give way to building skills in critical thinking, collaboration,

SEE BOARD OF EDUCATION PAGE 11



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# Help LAEF Help Students

By Janine Ingram, Executive Director

LAEF is an independent non-profit organization whose mission is to build durable relationships that help fund our vision, share our knowledge, and prepare every child in the Los Alamitos Unified School District for college and beyond.

Help LAEF help students!!! Did you know...

LAEF donates over \$110,000 each year to our school district to fund targeted intervention teachers at EVERY school.

LAEF offers exceptional After School Enrichment Programs that align with the district's commitment to the 4 A's – Academics, Arts, Athletics and Activities.

LAEF's Summer Enrichment Institute (SEI) provides 650 students (and growing) enrichment courses, jumpstart academic classes, and for credit and on-line courses for high school students.



Help us reach our Annual Campaign goal of \$150,000 with your tax-deductible donation!

Visit [www.LAEF4kids.org](http://www.LAEF4kids.org) to DONATE and learn more about LAEF



**Kay Coop**

Founder / Publisher



Academics, athletics, activities and the arts—Los Alamitos Unified School District is focused on excellence. The Los Alamitos Educational Foundation is focused on helping every student reach their academic goals and continues to need and appreciate the community's help.

Happy Holidays/Merry Christmas from our staff to you and your families. Our thoughts and gratitude are with the men and women in our armed services.

Our next issue is February 13, 2013. Until then Happy New Year!

## School News

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[www.schoolnewsrollcall.com](http://www.schoolnewsrollcall.com)  
 covering the  
**LOS ALAMITOS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**



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## Transitional Kindergarten



**Dr. Al Mijares**  
Superintendent

The kindergarten classroom of today is a very different place than most of us remember. As we strive to remain competitive in a global economy, our youngest students face a more challenging educational climate, and kindergarten curriculum is more rigorous than ever before. The challenging curriculum, coupled with California's longstanding trend of starting children in kindergarten at a younger age than most other states, has resulted in too many students beginning school without the maturity or social skills needed to succeed.

Research indicates that giving students under the age of five an extra year of academic preparation before they begin traditional kindergarten can make a big difference in their long term academic success. In fact, children who receive high quality early childhood education are less likely to be placed in special education or to be retained in later grades, and they are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college.

California's Kindergarten Readiness Act, signed into law in 2010, changed the kindergarten entry date from December 2 to September 1 so that children enter kindergarten at age five. The new entry date is being phased in beginning with the 2012-13 school year with full implementation in 2014-15. Along with this historic reform to kindergarten education, California legislators also created Transitional Kindergarten (TK) to address the needs of children who no longer have the option of beginning kindergarten before the age of five.

Taught by credentialed teachers, TK is the first year of a two-year kindergarten program available to students whose fifth birthdays fall between September 2 and December 2. TK is aligned with California's kindergarten standards and offers

SEE OC DEPT. OF EDUCATION PAGE 10

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12/09/12

# Hopkinson *Elementary*

12582 Kensington Road, Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4500 • www.losal.org



**Ondrea Reed**  
Principal

## Husky Leadership Council Leads the Way!

A program new to Hopkinson Elementary School this school year is the Husky Leadership Council, a student leadership program open to fifth-grade students. The group of 40 students, who completed a rigorous application process, willingly give up some of their recess and lunch time to make a difference on campus.

In addition to their council meetings focused on collaboration, leadership, and philanthropy, students serve on committees that positively impact the school culture. One of the standout committees is the conflict managers, who undergo a training process to learn how to resolve and mediate student conflict. Recently, Husky Leaders visited Los Alamitos High School, where they participated in a spirit assembly and learned about the Associated Student Body program. They also directed the school Halloween parade and are currently heading up a food drive to benefit a local charity.

There can be no doubt that Hopkinson's Husky Leaders will be suited for success!



# Laurel *High School*

10291 Bloomfield St., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4820 • www.losal.org



**Heidi Olshan**  
Principal

## Ribbons and Awards

The Laurel High School Knights have been very busy this fall. Red Ribbon Week was a time for reflection, honesty, and a willingness to pledge to live a healthy life and pursue a "natural high." Students heard from adults and peers about their journeys to sobriety, watched an inspirational video with powerful messages about living drug free from America's top celebrities and athletes, and received information about local support programs for young adults dealing with substance issues.



**Principal Heidi Olshan**  
with a student speaker during Red Ribbon Week.

Our first cycle ended on October 17, and we hosted our first Cycle Awards of this school year, with several students winning awards. Our community partners awarded student scholarships and participated in the ceremony. We were particularly excited to have three students receive the Perfect Attendance Award. These students attended school daily and were on time to class for the entire cycle.

Congratulations, Knights, for a job well done!



**The student award winners at the assembly.**

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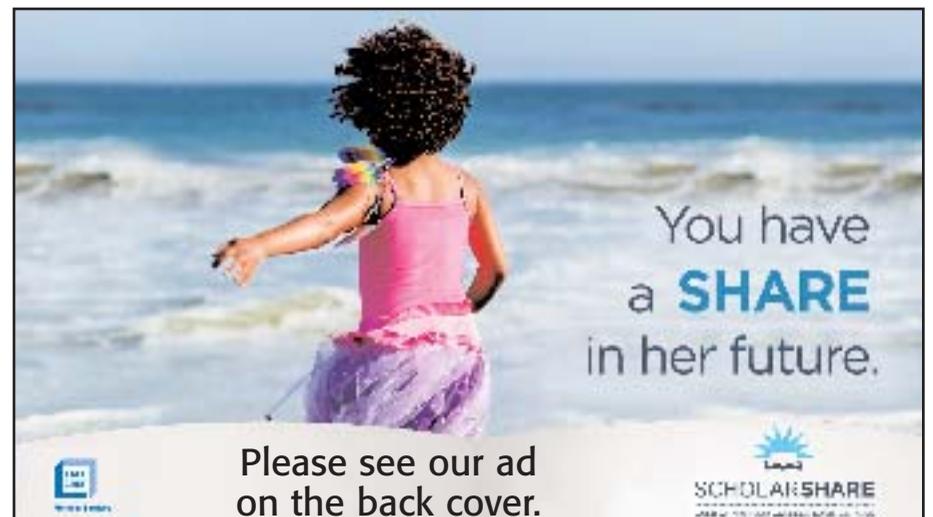
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# Lee *Elementary*

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**Robert Briggerman**  
Principal

computers, SMART Boards, document cameras, and interactive software programs for students, including the MIND ST Jiji conceptual math program.

This year's dinner and auction, Denim and Diamonds, was a huge success. Because of our donations and support of the auction, Lee will be able to continue to support these needs, in addition to purchasing iPads for classroom use!

On behalf of the Lee staff and student body, I truly thank Project LEAP and our incredible, supportive parent community for making these priceless programs available to all students.

## Project LEAP Supports Student Learning

Students at Lee Elementary School continue to receive support in their instruction due to the generous support of our parent funding group, Project Lee Educational Assistance Program (LEAP). Each year, through your generous donations, Project LEAP funds our media center teacher and many of the technological programs that enhance daily classroom instruction. In the past, Project LEAP has supported the site in the purchase of classroom



Lee computer lab funded by Project L.E.A.P.

# Los Alamitos *Elementary*

10862 Bloomfield St., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 714/816-3300 • www.losal.org



**Dr. Sunghie Okino**  
Principal

## Creativity and Initiative Abound!

Whoever thought LAE would host visitors from Madagascar? Whoever thought there would be so many ideas for student-run activities that Dr. Okino would have to develop an application process? Well, the creative juices are flowing at LAE. From Halloween costumes to student-run groups, LAE scholars not only demonstrate academic achievement at the highest level but also how to take the initiative and pursue new ideas.

The visitors from Madagascar were none other than Dr. Okino on Halloween as Alex the Lion and Marty the Zebra, aka Todd

Okino, in homemade costumes. A student-led club, the Birthday Club, was conceived by Taylor Squires to recognize each student's birthday as part of a bucket-filling mission. Other clubs include a journalism club, a card club, an origami club and a Korean club.

Dr. Okino commented, "We have many more ideas in the works. I am so impressed with the initiative and quality of proposals coming in. This is just another example that no matter how young you are, you can make a difference!"



Alex the Lion (Dr. Okino) and Marty the Zebra (Todd Okino)

# Los Alamitos *High School*

3591 Cerritos Ave., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4780 • www.losal.org



**Joshua Arnold**  
Principal

## A Shared Effort

That's why Los Alamitos High School's recent inclusion as one of the College Board's few Advanced Placement (AP) Honor Roll schools in the country is a true testament of the energy and vision of our students, teachers, and entire learning community.

Now in its third year, AP Honor Roll seeks to recognize schools and districts that achieve two key results regarding AP course offerings and examinations: an increase in students taking AP classes and participating in the most rigorous curriculum offered in high school and an increase in students earning three or better on AP exams, which are offered in May of every school year.

This year, Los Alamitos High School is proud to say that it has achieved both benchmarks and that more students are taking and passing AP courses and tests than ever before in the school's history. This can only be done through the efforts of highly-effective and collaborative teachers, which Los Al High is fortunate to have.

In the years to come, look for Los Alamitos High School to continue offering AP classes to a growing number of well-prepared students and to provide the instruction and innovation necessary so that every child succeeds, which, in turn, unlocks unlimited possibilities for their future!



**Bill MacDonald**  
Principal

## Ramp Up Reading

The new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have thrown down the gauntlet in terms of what is expected from elementary school readers...and McGaugh Elementary School teachers and students are rising to meet the challenge! According to the new CCSS, which will be fully adopted by the Los Alamitos Unified School District in 2013-2014, students will be expected to read, think critically about, and respond to higher-level texts, including fiction, non-fiction, and electronic media.

In order to prepare its students, McGaugh is taking a multi-tiered approach, which includes the purchase and use of leveled, non-fiction readers for kindergarten and first-grade students, a new Great Books curriculum in second through fourth grades to foster deep reading and critical thinking, and a school-wide focus on academic vocabulary in the content areas to develop understanding and fluency.

Professional development in Reader's Workshop, guided reading, promoting deep and complex thinking about texts, and using graphic organizers to create mental maps will also ensure that both staff and students are prepared to meet the increased challenge of the CCSS.

McGaugh parents have also been invited to join in preparing students to read at the next level. Responding to a challenge issued by the principal to read 30,000 books, McGaugh families have already logged over 5,000 books in a little over two months! There can be no doubt that McGaugh students will have the literacy skills to meet and exceed the new national standards.



**Dennis Sackett**  
Principal

## Balancing Business with Pleasure

McAuliffe students work hard every day, and they clearly have “Taken Care of Business (TCB),” as evidenced by the school’s high API score, 938, and McAuliffe’s selection as a National Blue Ribbon School for 2012. McAuliffe also offers students many opportunities that complement its academic program, including a school dress-up day that was held on Halloween. As students transition from K–5 to 9–12, it’s imperative that they develop not only academic skills but also social and emotional skills. McAuliffe’s activity programs help secure that development. Students also participate in spirit activities that include Stuff the Student, Bob and Build McAuliffe and Cheese Ball Toss, and spirit dress days that include Mustache Day, Holiday Hat Day, Crazy Hair Day and Any Team Dress Day.

In addition to lunch activities, our noontime intramurals include such sports as punt, pass, and kick; flag football; Ping-Pong; basketball; soccer; Ultimate Frisbee; and softball. At the end of the year, PE students participate in track-and-field activities. Following a school track meet in late May or early June, they participate in a track meet at Los Alamitos High School against their middle school colleagues at Oak Middle School. Sprints, distance events, hurdles, relay and field events like the high jump, broad jump and shot put are included. The students have a great time. This event is well attended by family members.

The middle school years are a special time, and we work really hard to get our students ready for their high school years. Go Eagles!



# GOTTA' LOVE COLD STONE



**Rules!!!** One word in the list is NOT in the word search.

When you have completed the word search, one word will be left and that is the word you email to: [Kay@schoolnewsrollcall.com](mailto:Kay@schoolnewsrollcall.com) (Please put LAUSD in the subject line)

**Entries must be received by January 15, 2013**

From the correct entries one name will be drawn to win a \$20 gift certificate redeemable at

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| BROWNIE       | GRAHAM CRACKER | TOPPINGS   |
| CARAMEL       | MUD PIE        |            |
| CHIP          | PEANUT         |            |

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P	P	G	O	A	O	R	B	E	I	P	D	U	M	J
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L	S	I	Z	A	B	P	D	J	C	B	E	R	H	U

**Congratulations to Connie Sims**  
**Winner of the October Word Search Contest!**

# Oak *Middle School*

10821 Oak St., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4740 • www.losal.org



**Sally Neiser**  
Principal

## 'Write On!'

As Oak continues Climbing Ever Higher, success in language arts other academic areas can be attributed to outstanding performance in student writing. We know that in order for our students to be successful, they must first be able to communicate effectively both orally and in writing. The transition to new National Common Core understanding occurs in all areas of study.

Oak's staff embraces the belief that writing is not solely the responsibility of the English-language-arts teachers. With this commitment, the entire staff was trained in the Jane Schaffer writing program, to be implemented so that all students have a common springboard for writers' success. Every class provides opportunities for students to express their learning through the formal writing process. Therefore, a student may have six different teachers throughout the school day, but they all use the same terminology when assigning writing, such as incorporating concrete details (CD) or commentary (CM).

Writing across the curriculum has been essential to help increase all students' writing ability. The impact of this unified approach to writing instruction is evident in the recent results of the 2012 STAR test scores, which indicate that 100 percent of Oak's seventh-grade students were awarded a proficient or advanced-proficient score on the statewide writing assessment. Congratulations to our students and staff for achieving this lofty goal and for demonstrating that with teamwork and effort, 100 percent proficiency is possible. Write on!

# Rossmoor *Elementary*

3272 Shakespeare Dr., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4520 • www.losal.org



**Kiva Spiratos**  
Principal

## Red Ribbon Week

At Rossmoor Elementary School, Red Ribbon Week brings spirit, creativity and fun! Each year, Red Ribbon Week reminds our students and community to make healthy choices for our selves and friends. This year, the theme, "Say 'Boo' to bad choices!" inspired students to create posters about making healthy choices, being active, avoiding bullying behaviors, and saying NO to harmful substances. Spirit days students enjoy are wearing red, jersey day, backwards day and our Rossmoor spirit day. So many students displayed their artistic ability, and our highlighted poster was created by a third grade student. His artistic ability is unsurpassed, and we are so proud of all our Rossmoor Knights!



Avi Jagdish, a Rossmoor third grader is the winner of our Red Ribbon Week poster event.

# Weaver *Elementary*

11872 Wembley Rd., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4580 • www.losal.org



**Erin Kominsky**  
Principal

## Common Core Standards

As the Weaver staff embraces the new Common Core Standards, our teaching and learning will be focused on the 4 C's of instruction including communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity.

During math, students engage in cognitively guided instruction where learners have the opportunity to go deeper into the understanding of mathematics. Students confer with each other and present ideas that are efficient strategies. With the use of iPads, students work collaboratively to conduct research, analyze sources and share out with their peers. Shared inquiry in literature develops communication skills along with critical thinking. Both teachers and students explore inquiry based science techniques as related to content goals in science. Utilizing the 4 C's of instruction will help move our Weaver students towards total implementation of the Common Core Standards.



Fifth graders conducting an inquiry based pig heart dissection to go along with their study of the circulatory system.

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## Note-ables

### Sing & Sign Holiday Time



Kate Karp

Children's holiday collections, in the past couple of decades, have become increasingly multicultural and inclusive, and this one tops them all. Sing 'n' Sign Holiday Time with Gaia includes songs celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa, a candle lighting for all the other cultural winter holidays such as Denali in India and the Islam festival Ramadan, special guest performers and, most striking of all, signing and subtitles for deaf and hard of hearing children. A training segment that includes a discussion about signing and brain theory can be accessed at any time during the performances so that hearing children can also learn to sign.

"Not everyone can read English or lips," said ASL interpreter Willa Heart. "This DVD creates equal access to joy, art, information and education."

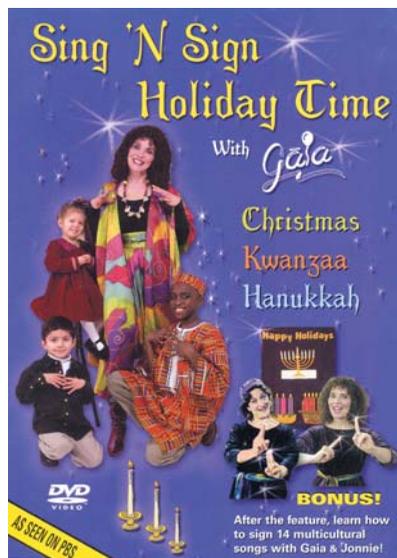
The songs are signed and performed by Emmy award-winning children's singer and song-signing artist Gaia Tossing. Gaia is gaily and playfully assisted by Jonnie (deaf signer Jonalee Folerzynski) and enhanced with performances by African drummer Master Atiba Y. Jali and the KidSign Club, which consists of both hearing and hard-of-hearing members.

Gaia is enchanting and resplendent as a winter goddess in a gauzy holiday outfit, colorful jewelry and absolutely magical hair. She'll instantly grab children's attention as she sings and signs and teaches the words to such songs as "The Little Drummer Boy," "Dreidel," "It's Kwanzaa Time" and several written by her and her husband Ed Tossing. Gaia's signing is clear and accurate, and subtitles are included for lyrics on the entertainment and training segments. The KidSign Club children sing and sign, sign and sing; Master Jali drums and teaches signing in Swahili; and Jonnie comically signs and mimes her way through "The Twelve Days of Christmas" in a way that anyone who's ever rehearsed it will relate to.

It's always easy to test the quality of a holiday album by how long it takes a listener to choke up, and this'll get you early on. As Gaia and her troupe sing and sign, peace, amani, shalom.

*Sing 'n' Sign Holiday Time is distributed through kimboed.com.*

Kate Karp is an editor for *School News Roll Call* and a freelance writer and editor.



## LAUSD Child Development Center

10862 Bloomfield St., Suite P-5, Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4585 • www.losal.org

### Poetry Appreciation



Kelly Rowe  
Child Development  
Coordinator /  
Early Learning  
Specialist

Introducing your youngster to poetry and rhyming can help him or her learn about phonemic awareness and enjoy language. Try these activities to inspire your child with poetry, and don't forget about the wonderful traditional nursery rhymes and good old Mother Goose.

Try finger plays together. Use hand motions when you recite counting rhymes. Ask your child to teach you some he or she learned at school, such as "Five Little Monkeys" or "One, Two, Buckle My Shoe." Then have your child make up hand motions for other poems. Thinking of actions to go with the words will help your child practice listening and reading comprehension skills.

Poetry plays offer your child an outlet for creativity. Read a poem to your youngster, and suggest that he or she paint a picture to go along with it. This will encourage your child to think about what the poem means. Your child might enjoy using finger paints or watercolors. Ask him or her to tell you which words in the poem provided ideas for the picture. Help your child write the poem's title and the poet's name on each painting, and collect the pictures in a folder. Using different art mediums will help your child with creativity and give a purpose for art.

Encourage your child to write his or her own poetry with a poem bucket. Your child can start by choosing a favorite topic and gathering related toys or household items in a "poem bucket." For instance, if your child wants to write about a dog, he or she might collect a leash, ball, and picture. Then, help your child write or dictate a line about each object. Encourage your child to use short phrases that rhyme. When the poem is finished, put the poem in the bucket along with the items. This activity will help your child's memory skills and pre-reading skills as he or she reads and shares the poem with other family members over and over again.

## Los Alamitos-Rossmoor Branch Library

12700 Montecito Road, Seal Beach, CA 90740 • 562/430-1048 • www.ocpl.org

### Love the Hunger Games?



Cathy DeLeon  
Branch Manager

Has your teen torn through the *Hunger Games* series and is now looking for what to read next? Here are a few science fiction thrillers to keep him or her excited about reading! All these and more can be found at the Los Alamitos-Rossmoor Library.

*Divergent* by Veronica Roth – In a future Chicago, sixteen-year-old Beatrice Prior must choose among five pre-determined factions to define her identity for the rest of her life, a decision that could tear her away from her family, but lead to a freedom she's never known.

*Among the Hidden* by Margaret Peterson Haddix – Luke is a third child in a world that doesn't allow more than two children per family. His options are hiding or dying.

*The Forest of Hands and Teeth* by Carrie Ryan – Through twists and turns of fate, orphaned Mary seeks life and love beyond her walled village, where dwell the unconsecrated, aggressive flesh-eating people who were once dead.

*Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card – Child-hero Ender Wiggin must fight a desperate battle against a deadly alien race if mankind is to survive.

*Life as We Knew It* by Susan Beth Pfeffer – When an asteroid knocks the moon dangerously close to the Earth, the homecoming dance suddenly becomes less important for Miranda.

*Uglies* by Scott Westerfeld – Just before their 16th birthdays when they will be transformed into beauties whose only job is to have fun, Tally's best friend runs away and Tally must find her and turn her in to the authorities, or never become pretty at all.





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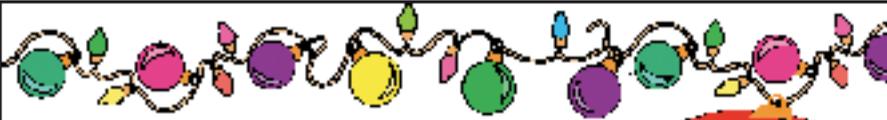
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# Whadda Ya Know?!



Carol Berg Sloan, RD

Sugar consumption has been in the news lately with the soda ban in NYC and like initiatives popping up in cities throughout California. Restaurants will be posting nutrition facts for your information, how will they affect your choices? Nutrition, food and health are always in the headlines. In speaking with many of my clients they show solidarity for such bans and praise calorie postings, but when we start talking about the details of these headlines, many don't understand the basics of what they eat and how it affects their weight and health. I compiled some questions and answers which provide the basics so you can make informed nutrition decisions about what you eat and better understand your health.

## How many calories should we consume per day?

The average American adult who does weekly exercise and is at a healthy weight should consume about 2000 calories daily. Obviously this number can vary because our bodies and metabolism are different. My point here is that while many restaurants are posting nutritional analysis there is no point of reference.

## How many calories do you have to eat to gain/lose an actual pound of fat?

If you have been maintaining your weight and want to lose or gain a pound in a week without changing your exercise regime, you either need to eat 500calories less or more per day. A pound of fat (adipose tissue) arrives when 3500 calories in excess have been consumed and are now being stored. The same goes for losing a pound of fat, 500 calories a day should be cut from the daily intake. I find a disconnect with most understanding the calories in = calories out concept. I must also remind you that water can make the scale numbers change without affecting your actual weight.

What is a healthy weight? There are several ways to find out where you land on the weight chart. One is to measure your body mass index (BMI) [www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/](http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/) or you can measure your waist circumference [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose\\_wt/risk.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/risk.htm)

The websites above can help you calculate your weight and you will know on paper, if you are overweight, obese or morbidly obese. Needless to say your risk for chronic disease such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and cancer increase with weight.

Lastly back to the ban on soft drinks larger than 16 ounces in various venues in New York and other counties across the nation. I appreciate that Mayor Bloomberg was able to draw attention to the obesity epidemic, but I don't think the actual ban is going to make a difference in calories consumed from sodas. Pointing a finger at one food or beverage as the cause for what ails us is ridiculous. I've been to New York many times and I think a sidewalk pretzel with cheese sauce or slice of pizza ban would be more effective in terms of calories (and saturated fat) consumed.

My hope is that the simple Q&A above will encourage you to become more informed and make healthier changes and choices in the lives of your family.

Carol Berg Sloan, RD is a nutrition therapist in Long Beach. She can be reached [cburd@verizon.net](mailto:cburd@verizon.net).

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# Keeping Your Pet Safe During Holidays

By Murlyn E. Burkes, Cat Committee Liaison

With the holidays right around the corner, we have a few tips for pet owners to consider in order to keep pets safe at home.

When it comes to food, try not to share with your pet. Too many fatty, rich, or different foods are not good for your pet's digestive system. Feeding bones can injure your pets insides ,and chocolate used for baking can kill your dog immediately. Be sure everyone knows the rules about feeding your pets. Sometimes your visitors may forget!

Be sure cords for holiday lights are secured down or covered. This will help prevent burns or other injuries. Hang glass ornaments up high and out of reach of your pet. Try to avoid tinsel, as this can be swallowed by your pet and an emergency vet visit may be needed to retrieve it.

Many holiday plants are toxic to animals. Mistletoe, holly, poinsettias, and lilies need to be kept out of your pet's reach.

If you follow these tips, you and your pet will enjoy a happy holiday season.

## OC DEPT OF EDUCATION • FROM PAGE 3



Dr. Al Mijares  
Superintendent

curriculum and classroom environments designed to support growth in the cognitive, physical, and social-emotional domains of development. For many children who do not have access to quality preschool, TK could make the difference in providing them with the foundation they need to be better prepared for success once they enter traditional kindergarten.

The Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) will support district leadership with implementing TK programs by offering a Transitional Kindergarten Teacher Spring Institute in May 2013 and creating a Transitional Kindergarten Teacher Network to focus on curriculum and assessment, along with planning and organizing the TK classroom. OCDE has also set up two model Transitional Kindergarten classrooms that offer tours and observations of teachers implementing curriculum. In collaboration with the California Kindergarten Association, OCDE will feature these model classrooms in a series of TK training videos that are scheduled for release in winter 2012.

High-quality early childhood programs like TK are designed to be a bridge between early learning and kindergarten. The academic and social gains provided by such programs are an important step to ensuring California's youngest students enjoy success in kindergarten and beyond.

For more information, visit [www.ocde.us/SEED/Pages/Transitional-Kindergarten.aspx](http://www.ocde.us/SEED/Pages/Transitional-Kindergarten.aspx).

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**Dr. Sherry Kropp**  
Superintendent

While academic achievement remains a top priority, Los Alamitos Unified School District prides itself on four As: academics, athletics, activities, and the arts. One of the district's priorities is for every student to be involved in at least one co-curricular or extracurricular activity. We are diligently working on supporting programs at all of our sites that encourage and motivate all students to stay connected to school through involvement in athletics, activities, and/or the arts. We have student leadership, Ambassadors, choir, recycling groups, after-school language classes, and many other activities for our elementary students. At the middle school level, we have choir, band, drama, leadership, intramural sports, and a variety of additional clubs and activities to engage students. We provide opportunities for future Griffins to connect with advisors and coaches at Los Alamitos High School to help provide a seamless transition in the four As.

Research tells us that high school students do better in multiple areas if they are connected to school through involvement in co-curricular and extracurricular activities. All of our work through eighth grade culminates in exemplary programs at Los Alamitos High School and helps ensure that students stay connected to school through graduation. We have award-winning programs in choral and instrumental music. We have rich programs in theater, visual arts, and dance. Students may choose to join over 93 clubs that range from service clubs, such as Interact, to special interest clubs, such as Chess Club. We have 23 athletic programs and support nontraditional programs, such as roller hockey and crew. And, every year, new clubs and activities are created to meet the interests of our student population.

We want the very best for our students and know that involvement in all four As will help prepare them to thrive after they graduate from high school. Together, we can continue to "Ignite Unlimited Possibilities for Students" by continuing to prioritize academics, athletics, activities, and the arts across the district, at all schools and at all levels.

**BOARD OF EDUCATION • FROM PAGE 1**



**Meg Cutuli**  
President

creativity and communication. These are all higher level thinking skills, which all of our children will need in the future. And Los Alamitos Unified School District has been working on these skills already.

I asked Mrs. Kominsky what was the most memorable experience she had while in Washington D.C. Without a pause, she said it was the ringing of the school bells. At an evening event, each principal was individually presented with an old-fashioned school bell, reminiscent of the one-room school house. These bells are engraved with the recipients' names. After all the principals returned to their seats, the clappers in the bells were freed, and all the principals rang their bells for the students in their states, their school districts, and their school sites. The sound was loud enough to be heard in California! Mrs. Kominsky rang her bell at Weaver's flag ceremony when she returned from Washington D.C.

Mrs. Kominisky said that she felt like she was standing on the shoulders of giants the entire time she was in Washington. She was awed and inspired by the people she met. Mrs. Kominsky said she left knowing that educators have the most important job in the world and she is inspired to work even harder for the students.

**Real Estate Matters**

**Ways to Avoid Sabotaging a Home Purchase**



**CathyLyn Brooks**

DO start a file and keep copies of all of your financial documentation as you receive them. These items include paycheck stubs, W-2 forms, 1099 Forms, tax returns, bank statements, investment account statements, rental agreements and so on. Any source of income that you have will need to be documented and may require a final update as your loan progresses.

DON'T change jobs. If you must make a change in your employment, consult with your lender ahead of time and let them know. Your loan will not be funded unless your employment can be verified and they need to know where you work.

- DO wait to buy a new car, boat, TV, furniture or other appliances until after your loan has funded.
- DON'T apply for new credit (see #3) or give your personal information to anyone who may run your credit. Additional inquiries on your credit may reduce your credit score and will have to be explained to the underwriter.
- DON'T buy things with your existing credit cards. A final credit report is often run and you could lose your loan approval if your debt to income ratio has changed. If you MUST make a large charge or purchase, consult your lender before doing so.
- DO have any portion of the down payment that is coming to you as a gift placed in your account as soon as possible. DO be sure that you understand the rules and documentation that is required for gifts such as this and DO be sure to follow them.
- DON'T keep cash offshore in a foreign account, in a safe, or under your mattress that you plan to use as your down payment on a purchase. These funds need to be in banks in the United States and your lender can tell you how and when to transfer the funds so they may be used.
- DON'T make large deposits into (or withdrawals from) your bank accounts unless you have to. If you have to move funds around, DO save the documentation so you can show a "paper trail" of the funds.
- DO plan to research and commit to a homeowner's insurance policy for your new home. DO consult with your current home, auto or other insurance agents to obtain quotes. DO be sure to give the name and contact information of your selected agent to your escrow officer and your lender. Some firms require an inspection of the property and this may need to be arranged through your agent.
- DO expect to receive calls and correspondence from many parties during your escrow. Your lender, your escrow and title firms, and credit agencies will be providing you with required documentation.

Though the experience may be new to you, an experienced lender and real estate broker, or agent, can guide you through the process so that it will be virtually painless.

CathyLyn Brooks has been a local real estate broker since 1980, earning the advanced credentials of Certified Residential Specialist and Graduate Realtor through advanced education and sales volume. She has completed the American Bar Association's approved Paralegal certification and is an instructor at UCI in the Paralegal program. The NASD, the NYSE, and the National Futures Organization have appointed her as a public arbitrator. Her degree is in finance and marketing from USC. CathyLyn is affiliated with Main Street Realtors and can be reached at: 562/719-2530 or cathylyn@earthlink.net Consumers should seek legal and tax advice from professionals in each field

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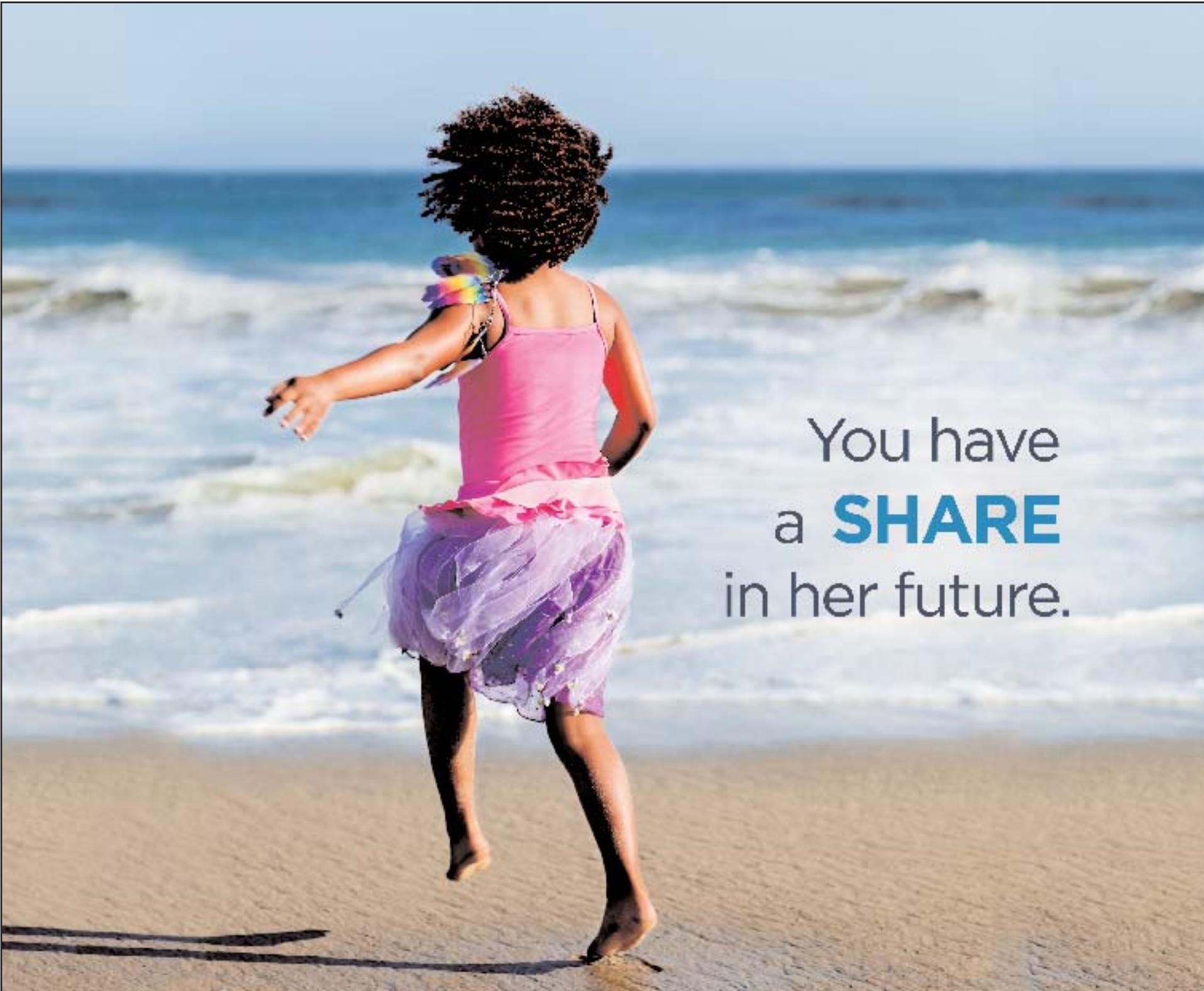
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