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School News

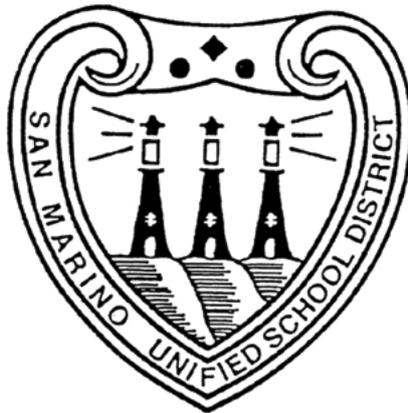


Education + Communication = A Better Nation

Covering the San Marino Unified School District

Volume 2, Issue 3

November 2020–February 2021



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Superintendent



Capitalizing on Connectedness

In San Marino Unified schools, connectivity is the key to our students' success and is why we remain Niche's #1 Best School District in Los Angeles, #3 Best School District in California, and top 25 Best School District in the nation. In this year

of COVID, when connecting with students and with each other has been so difficult, SMUSD teachers and staff have made it their priority to connect our students to the classroom through innovative educational programs, tools, and opportunities, and to provide connections with important mental health and wellness resources. We proudly recognize that social and emotional well-being is the ultimate key to success and do all we can to make our students feel safe and supported at school.

In SMUSD, student connectedness is bolstered by the fact that we have some of the most effective educators around. We remain steadfast in connecting teachers with training related to student-centered instructional shifts, such as Universal Design for Learning, to help them grow the tools in their toolbelt that will allow them to reach and connect with each of their students in robust, meaningful ways.

Maintaining the level of excellence that our district has become known for would be impossible without our community connection. In spite of being one of the lowest funded school districts in one of the lowest funded states for public education, San Marino Unified remains a leader in K-12 education. Simply put, we could neither survive nor thrive without our community's consistent financial support.

Throughout 2020 and beyond, we will continue to lean forward into capitalizing on our connectedness, ensuring our students have access to making their own important connections to their talents, strengths, and passions today that will serve them the rest of their lives.

Board of Education

By C. Joseph Chang, President

Due to the CoVID-19 pandemic, the Los Angeles County Office of Education has recommended all schools close effective on March 16. The San Marino Unified School District has come a long way since then as we navigated the national crisis. Thank you for your support. We remain committed to giving your children a world-class education.

SMUSD has progressed from closed instructional support and activities to now safe and successful distance learning. In the meantime, SMUSD has strived to keep you updated with State, County, and school developments and resources to safely fight the outbreak. We are very fortunate to have Dr. Choi, our Chief Technology Officer, work closely with District Administration. Our Technology Department continues to provide internet access and distributed Chromebooks to support distance learning. We have succeeded in creating a 100% online learning curriculum to protect our youth. We are deeply appreciative of our partnership with the San Marino Schools Foundation. In May, SMSF launched the WE ARE SAN MARINO campaign and restored twenty teacher and counselor positions. Thank you so much to both our parents and community citizens' generous donation to ensure a teaching workforce that preserves student learning.

On behalf of the Board of Education and SMUSD, I applaud the enthusiasm of our students and the support of our parents during these unprecedented and unique times. We truly appreciate the spirit of our teachers and staff, the leadership of Superintendent Dr. Wilson, and the encouragement of the San Marino community. Currently, the SMUSD CoVID-19 Compliance Team continues to implement the plans developed by the SMUSD Schools Reopening Task Force. SMUSD is preparing to meet with the Los Angeles Department of Public Health to discuss reopening protocols for K-12 schools and the TK-2nd grade waiver process.

Thank you for your patience and support during this unusual and difficult time. Please stay safe and healthy!

Board of Education



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School News

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Covering the
SAN MARINO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Welcome back to another school year. This is our 2nd year publishing the San Marino Unified School District *School News*. There have been many changes throughout the years; however, I think we all agree this is the most challenging. Americans are innovative and educators are at the top of the list. Zoom has taken on a whole new meaning to this generation

of students. Fortunately, students and educators were proficient with technology to help with the seamless transition to distance learning. Families stepped up to the challenge.

Thank you for continuing to include *School News* among your reading choices.

Be sure to enter our word search contest below open to all ages.

Our next issue is March 3, 2021.

Happy Holidays
from the
School News Staff!

Toy Store Items–Word Search Contest

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 word you email to: Kay@schoolnewsrollcall.com Please put San Marino in the subject line.

Entries must be received by **January 15, 2021**
From the correct entries one name will be drawn to win
a Barnes & Noble \$20 gift card!

- | | |
|----------|------------|
| BIKE | MARBLES |
| DOLL | CRAYON |
| TRIKE | PENS |
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Educational Services

1665 West Dr., San Marino, CA 91108 • 626/299-7010 • www.smusd.us



Hello

It is an honor and privilege to have been selected as the new Executive Director of Educational Services in the San Marino Unified School District. I am thrilled and excited to serve the San Marino community and look forward to building upon the strong legacy of excellence this district and community has established for students.

Dr. Lena Richter
Executive Director

Over the span of my career, I have had the privilege of serving school communities in various capacities. My professional career began as a classroom teacher in the Glendale Unified School District. After 15 years of teaching, I was promoted to Teacher Specialist and later held the position of Elementary Principal, High

School Assistant Principal, and Director of Categorical Programs and Interventions.

Having served as a K-12 educator for the past 30 years, I understand and recognize the hard work that goes into educating students and building programs and opportunities that allow students to strive for excellence and achieve beyond boundaries. I am excited to be doing this work collaboratively with the SMUSD community as we continue the charge of building leading edge educational programs and forging innovative partnerships with local colleges and businesses to expand opportunities for all students. I am excited about this new opportunity and look forward to the work ahead as we best prepare our students for their future.

San Marino Schools Foundation

1665 West Dr., San Marino, CA 91108 • 626/299-7014 • smsf.org

Thank you for Supporting Our Children

By SMSF Executive Committee

These unprecedented times challenge so many of our norms and traditions. To endure - and thrive - requires grit and determination. We all need to come together to continue to provide an outstanding education for all of our children. In the face of challenges, opportunities for innovation and creativity emerge.

Teachers, parents, and SMSF worked hard to start the school year virtually. This type of significant change provides a key window for transformation in education; the Foundation is no exception. We are enhancing our digital presence, allowing us to engage virtually with our school community, broader community, alumni, and students.

One central pillar of our district does remain the same, however. This is the reliance our schools have on local funding for sustained academic excellence. The combination of the Foundation and local parcel taxes propels our schools to the top of schools rankings in California. Great schools fortify our community to thrive even amidst these uncertain times.

The Foundation remains committed and determined to engage the entire community on



the funding needed by each school campus and to bring new and innovative engagement approaches to our mission of empowering excellence in our schools. The Foundation's Annual Giving Campaign enables smaller class sizes at each campus by funding 34 teaching positions (close to 25% of all teachers in our schools) in both core academic and elective programs.

Our supporters are the reason why our children receive the best education in the state.

Thank you!
SMSF



PTSA

1665 West Dr., San Marino, CA 91108 • 626/299-7000 • www.smusd.us

Kathryn Oliveros, President

The first quarter of the 2020-2021 school year has been unlike any other in our school district's history. While we all miss the hustle, bustle and excited chatter of our school hallways, we know that students, teachers, and district administration are still very much hard at work. At the same time, San Marino School PTAs have been enthusiastically reimagining ways to keep students, parents, and teachers connected beyond the classroom. Through the hard work of the PTAs, PFA, Teachers and school leaders, here are just a few of the ways our community has been able to come together:

- Back to School and Registration Days
- Valentine Pumpkin Patch, Book Fair and Read-A-Thon
- Carver Picture Day, 5th Grade Certificate Pick up, curbside library and Jog-A-Thon
- HMS Hauntington Breakfast
- Red Ribbon Week
- Halloween Drive-thru Parades at Carver and Valentine
- SMHS Tony's Pizza Fundraiser
- Teacher Appreciation Luncheons
- PTA Reflections Program

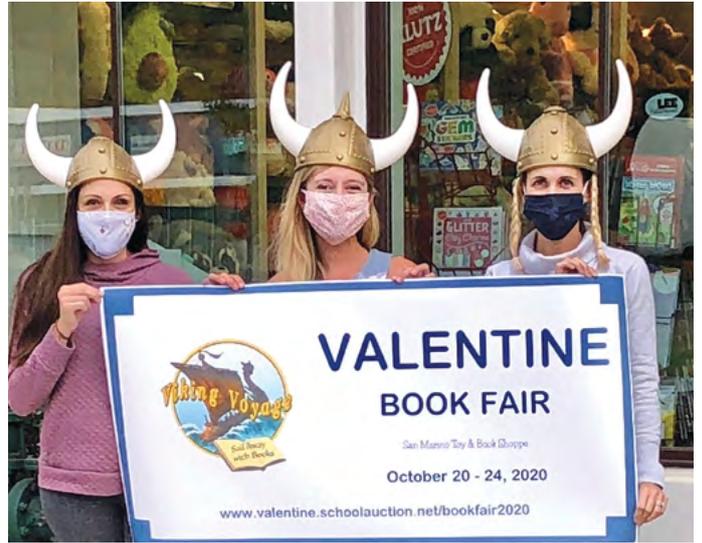


Even (and especially!) during this time of virtual learning, everyone's support is essential to our schools' success. PTA welcomes and encourages your support in your child's education. Our volunteerism sets us apart from many school districts and serves as an example to our children. We are fortunate that our community provides many opportunities for involvement and celebrates the dedication and talents of our volunteers.



PTSA

(continued from page 6)



I encourage you all to get involved and connected with the PTAs at your school sites. Together we will keep our community strong and our kids connected until the time we can open up our beautiful schools and see each other in the halls again.



Carver *Elementary School*

3100 Huntington Dr., San Marino, CA 91108 626/299-7080 • www.carverschool.us



Dr. Michael Lin
Principal

Great Honor

K.L. Carver School is one of 367 schools in the nation that is recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School for 2020. After being nominated in March for this national award, Carver School underwent a comprehensive application process that spanned several months during the COVID-19 pandemic. The coveted National Blue Ribbon Schools award affirms the hard work of our educators, students, families, guardians, volunteers, district office, Schools Foundation, generous donors and San Marino community in creating a safe and welcoming learning environment where students master challenging and engaging content and where the faculty and staff share a unity of purpose to make a positive difference in all our students.

In addition to being a three-time California Distinguished School, this is the second time that Carver School has won the National Blue Ribbon School Award. Carver School is also ranked as the number one public elementary school in the county of Los Angeles for three years in a row, according to Niche.com. These recognitions are a testament to the continued excellence that we see in the learning culture at Carver School in the San Marino Unified School District. This learning culture extends to the virtual domain this year, with teachers embracing new technologies and new means of communication to collaborate in instructional design and connect with students through meaningful and engaging learning activities.



Huntington Middle School

1700 Huntington Dr., San Marino, CA 91108 • 626/299-7060 • www.hehms.us



Dr. Daryl Topalian
Principal

Stronger through Challenge

Henry E. Huntington Middle School recently completed the first quarter of virtual academy while in distance learning. Has it been a challenge for students and teachers? Yes!

Does virtual academy require more time, energy and effort from students and staff? Yes, absolutely! However, in the

midst of it all, students are learning by using different platforms and staff are learning new ways of teaching their content area in a virtual format. Teachers are continuing to explore new strategies for increasing student engagement while practicing new pedagogical methods to maintain SMUSD's commitment to academic excellence. And now, HMS students and staff are gaining seasoned experience through the trials, struggles and rewards of distance learning.

Along with schools throughout the nation, HMS students participated in Red Ribbon Week in October. Activities and theme days were planned by HMS ASB students and community members from Partnership for Awareness. Each day was filled with theme-based activities for students to participate in. Those days included No Homework Night, De-Stress Day, Anti-Bullying Campaign, Be Happy. Be Brave. Be Drug Free, and then Halloween. Pictures and videos will be posted on the Huntington Middle School website.



Recently, HMS students, teachers, families and community members participated in HMS's biggest fundraiser, the annual Hauntington Breakfast. The 2020 Hauntington Breakfast was themed with Jack Skellington from *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. HMS families and patrons celebrated at home this year with DIY pancake kits. The celebration and festivities were a huge success. For more information and to see pictures and videos, go to www.hauntingbreakfast.com.



San Marino *High School*

2701 Huntington Dr., San Marino, CA 91108 • 626/299-7020 • www.sanmarinohs.org



Jason Kurtenbach
Principal

Greater Than Ever!

San Marino High School is finding distance learning a creative opportunity for growth. Teachers have stretched themselves far outside their comfort zone and, in doing so, have found amazing opportunities that will provide us skills for use far beyond our current closure.

We have learned that having live-streamed and recorded information meetings such as our Senior Parent Meeting, Financial Aid Meeting, Town Hall Meeting and Java with Jason provide opportunities for continued learning and understanding after the fact. Additionally, we found great success with scheduling our senior meetings because of the greater ease of availability. Moreover, our Mock College Interviews look to be the most well attended we've ever had.

We've also learned that we have many other ways to evaluate student learning. We've begun implementing Project Based Learning, oral interviewing and collaborative assessments. Our staff also continues to learn how to best use and exploit the power of Schoology and Zoom through the use of virtual whiteboards and breakout rooms. Our

Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) Department has developed ingenious ways for students to perform even when they cannot rehearse together. Recently, our Drama Department performed an online and live version of *Alice (Alice in Wonderland)*. Our dance students are editing video together to provide all of us with an amazing, unique performance experience. Our choirs are planning the same with upcoming live performances as well.

Our student athletes are also beginning to return with cohorts of up to 12 students and one coach in football, boys and girls volleyball, tennis and basketball along with cross-country running, individual practice drills and workouts since mid-October.

What we have learned more than anything is that we are much stronger, more resilient and more creative than we ever thought possible. We have the opportunity to make the most of a difficult situation, learn new skills, and implement creative solutions for the benefit of all our staff and students as long as we keep in mind a growth mindset with grace and kindness for all involved. This situation is temporary, and when we emerge and students are fully back on campus, we will undoubtedly be better than we ever planned to be.

Valentine *Elementary School*

1650 Huntington Dr., San Marino, CA 91108 626/299-7090 • www.valentineschool.org



Alana Fauré
Principal

Making Connections Virtually

Like all teachers across our district, we miss our students and are counting down the days until we can meet again on campus. In the meantime, Valentine teachers have sharpened their digital skills in Zoom, Schoology, and Google. Distance learning accelerated how we approach teaching and learning. Students' virtual educational experiences are progressing even as we

anticipate the return to in-person instruction.

Making connections with students in a virtual classroom has been the top priority for Valentine staff. The social and emotional well-being of our students is foundational for healthy academic achievement. Our teachers have collaborated with shared expertise to create safe, inviting learning environments. While distance learning will never replace the relationships which are forged in a physical classroom, we have creatively pivoted our approach to ensure the success of all our students.





Kate Karp

Finding Friends

Oran Etkin's latest collection is more than a trip around the world in music. With "Finding Friends," listeners take an actual journey to six countries—the Czech Republic, Zimbabwe, China, Turkey, Russia and Japan—where Etkin and his instruments actually visited for this project. There, they'll hear



unspeakably beautiful and catchy, upbeat songs performed in both English and the native languages.

The collection was originally recorded with an adult audience in mind, but Etkin soon realized that the music would appeal to children as well. He and the musicians in each country overdubbed conversational introductions to the songs and taught a few words of the native languages—another attraction for parents and educators.

If you find learning words in other languages fascinating, wait until you meet all the instruments. Etkin's clarinet, the feature character, bears the name—what else—Clara Net. You're likely familiar with accordions, drums and bass clarinets, one of which is Clara's big brother. But what's a cimbalom, or an mbira? Can an erhu—a two-stringed Chinese fiddle—pack the same resonance as its four-stringed U.S. cousin? Listen and engage.

Depending on your national origin or culture, you may recognize a few of the songs and appreciate the arrangements, like the surprising Latin beat of the Czech song "Chaye Shukariye" or the jazz flavor that Clara Net added to the Yiddish chicken soup of "Tumbalalaika." The big takeaway is, however, the appreciation of diversity in our common language: music.

'Can You Feel It?'

Can You Feel It? is a collection of original songs about natural science, played simply and organically. Banjo, bass, steel guitar, drums and keyboard blend with Jessa Campbell's lilting voice as she sings to both young people and adults about sun and shadow, a salmon's circular journey from birth to spawning adulthood, burrowing mammals, fractals...



Wait—*fractals*?

Yes, fractals. And alevins, bract, trillium and frass. *Can You Feel It?* doesn't play cute with science. The selections enchantingly introduce science vocabulary without being didactic or windy. They sneak up on anthropomorphism but don't diminish or trivialize the concepts through fantasy. "Waltz of the Trillium and Ant," for instance, encapsulates the natural partnership of flower structure, ant colonies,

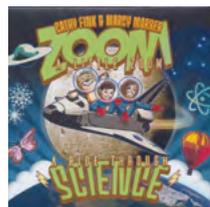
pollination and germination in a waltz melody. It's like a fairy tale, but the sprites are unarguably real. "Mole in the Ground," written in the Appalachian mountain tune manner, speeds up or slows down each verse depending on the pace of each animal.

The title song has a silent tone and focuses on feeling instead of sound. The listener can feel the waves as the salmon roll from freshwater to saltwater and back, changing from alevin to smolt to adult. The bouncy "T-Rex in the Forest" begs to be acted out by children who'll enjoy snoring like a prehistoric reptile. "How I Love You, Sun" is a worthy love song to the star that gives light, energy and life to everything on Earth.

How Campbell manages to pack so many ideas about each topic into every song without cramming it all in is a marvel, like her subjects themselves.

Zoom a Little Zoom

With all the changes around the planet, it brings you down to earth—like gravity—how basic science remains the same. Snowflakes still form through crystallization, lightning still comes from electrical charges, and that ol' gravity will still bring ya down! But fear not—the inherent lightness in *Zoom a Little Zoom* will have everyone up, moving, and learning about science at lightning speed!



The songs were selected from *Ballads for the Age of Science*, a forward-thinking collection of vinyl LPs produced in 1961. They featured original songs performed by folk and pop-music artists active in the mid-20th century, including Tom Glazer of "On Top of Spaghetti

Fame." The project aimed to make basic science enjoyable and understandable to children. Now, Cathy Fink and Marcy Marxer, two longtime busker-type musical artists, have brought these songs into the STEAM-science present with *Zoom*, swapping one musical style for another—the duo does a great Andrews Sisters!—but retaining the lyrics

Nature, space, energy and weather are all renewed. "Vibration" uses stringed instruments in the best way possible; "Why Does the Sun Shine?" is a sea chanty that talks about how far, how big and how important our Mother Star is to life; and "We Know the Air Is There" suggests a neat experiment and is enhanced with fiddle solos and banjo plucking. Speaking of experiments, a downloadable PDF with science activities comes with the CD.

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



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