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School News

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Covering the Los Alamitos Unified School District

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 56

www.SchoolNewsRollCall.com

APRIL / MAY 2014

LAUSD 2014 Employees of the Year

By Dr. Andrew Pulver
Assistant Superintendent Human Resources

The cornerstone of the Los Alamitos Unified School District (LAUSD) culture of excellence is a team of highly skilled and passionate staff members who are relentless about igniting unlimited possibilities for students.

Our classified employees are often our unsung heroes, working behind the scenes to make seamless improvements to ensure students and teachers are well equipped to achieve excellence in academics, athletics, activities and the arts. We are proud to recognize our classified employees of the year, who exemplify our outstanding staff.



Dina Allstead, Business Services Specialist – District Office

Dina began working for Los Alamitos in March 1996 as an accounting assistant, handling various responsibilities such as accounts payable, accounts receivable, and other accounting duties. In 2007, she was promoted to a business service specialist. Dina is the “go to” person for principals and other departments for budget, accounting, and financial reporting for all local, state, and federal categorical programs. Her supervisors and colleagues describe her as outstanding in all aspects of her position and

someone who personifies customer service. Dina is an ideal employee. She excels at her job, displays outstanding customer service, and has a positive and proactive attitude! Principals and school staff respect her and appreciate how she understands what takes place in the classroom and helps them focus on student learning. She truly goes out of her way to help others and to support the sites. We can always count on Dina to get the job done right and on time. Her expertise, kindness, and friendly attitude are extraordinary.



Carol Donner, Office Coordinator – Hopkinson Elementary School

Carol is the hub of Hopkinson and greets all staff, students, and visitors with a smile, always willing to help and solve problems. When you mention that you work with Carol, the response is “I love Carol!” People say this with genuine expression, and it isn’t hard to see why Carol has made such a lasting impression on so many people. She wears many hats during the school day and can be found helping visitors at the front desk, bandaging students up in the health office, and aiding teachers during

recess and lunch. She takes great pride in all that she does. She is enthusiastic about being efficient and completes her heavy daily workload with precision and excellence. Carol is a culture-changing pioneer, sometimes leaving “pick me up” notes in staff mailboxes and making everyone feel appreciated. She truly is an exceptional office coordinator and employee.



Rick Remijio, Custodian – Los Alamitos High School

Rick is a valued member and leader of the maintenance and custodial staff at Los Alamitos High School. He excels at everything he does and never flinches at the sight of an obstacle. Instead, he sizes up the challenge, plans accordingly, and implements action plans that overcome every hurdle. Rick organized, emphasized, and led pieces of a school makeover project—a program which was designed to significantly improve the grounds and culture of

the campus for all students, families, and visitors. He worked with teachers and provided them with the background knowledge, training, and support to revamp the campus and keep it looking in tip-top share for years to come. Rick is a great problem-solver with a can-do attitude. He cares deeply about the students and wants to ensure that the school facilities are in perfect working order for each and every teacher and student on campus. Rick’s attitude exemplifies the best in an employee, and he is a wonderful role model for his co-workers.



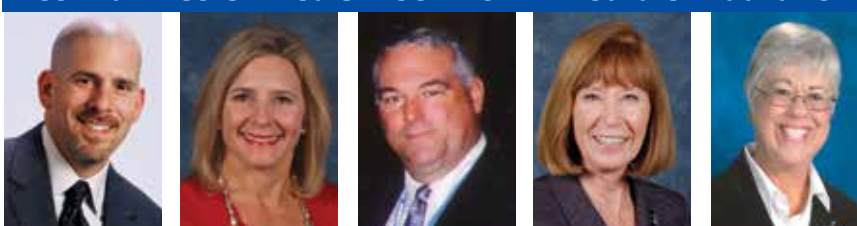
Adrianne Chavez, Instructional Assistant – English as Second Language

Adrianne has been instrumental in ensuring the district meets all state and federal guidelines regarding the assessment and progress of the district’s English learners. Training other staff members and providing ongoing support and encouragement to others to ensure our students are assessed fairly and accurately is just one way Adrianne exhibits excellent leadership skills. She is committed to helping all students to be successful no matter what. Students come into the district with a wide range of

language backgrounds, from almost fluent to illiterate in their home language with no English knowledge. It is not uncommon to have Adrianne, the classroom teacher, and a counselor triage together to determine the best approach for each individual student. Adrianne also works closely with parents to provide strategies to help their students at home. Adrianne’s attention to detail, organization, and passion for ensuring all students reach their highest potential is inspiring.

People truly are the hallmark of our district. The exceptional qualities these employees bring each day reflect the passion, skill, and dedication of every employee throughout the district. The contributions our employees provide continue to make LAUSD a great place to live, work, and go to school!

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Avoid the Summer Learning Loss!

By Carrie Logue, Executive Director, Los Alamitos Education Foundation

Are you looking for fun and enriching academic options for your child this summer? Look no further! The Los Alamitos Education Foundation's Summer Enrichment Institute will continue to offer valuable classes to students in grades K-12.

Sessions will be offered from June 30-July 11 and July 14-25. This will total four weeks of education to offset the summer learning loss. Registration is now open at www.LAEF4kids.org/programs.

Small classes of 17 students maximum, taught by credentialed teachers in two-hour blocks, provide an ideal learning environment. Elementary offerings (at Hopkinson) will include Jumpstart classes for kindergarten through fifth grade, Spanish, computer literacy, science, language arts, musical theater, design sewing, art, and fitness.

At the middle and high school levels (at McAuliffe) the courses will cover driver's education, algebra, geometry, digital literacy/coding, zoology, geology, public speaking, and even self-publishing!

Coursework in the arts includes digital photography, ukulele, guitar, competitive improvisation, acting, drawing/painting, and computer drawing. Early bird reduced registration fees are available through Tuesday, May 27. The details are at www.LAEF4kids.org.

Classes for credit will also be offered online for health and government, and on campus for ceramics and health. These classes will run from June 18-July 22. Online registration is open now through June 10.

LAEF is also teaming up with LAHS to offer summer sports camps. Girls and boys volleyball, boys basketball, and coed wrestling camps are available to varying ages by sport.

Don't forget either to register for the Young Americans Performing Arts Workshop taking place on April 25-27!



Kay Coop
Founder/Publisher



Congratulations to the Employees of the Year!

Comprehensive music classes, iPad pilot program, speech contest, Common Core Collaboration, Read Across America, and a Conference for the Gifted are all topics in this issue.

Lauren Barrette, graduate of Los Alamitos High School, is a regular contributor to *School News* and this issue she writes a thank you to two teachers who made a lasting impression on her. (page 8)

Our next issue is June 4. Thank you for reading *School News*.

School News

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Covering the
LOS ALAMITOS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

FOUNDER/PUBLISHER: Kay Coop
562/493-3193 • kay@schoolnewsrollcall.com

ADVERTISING SALES:
Heidi Guiol • 562/598-1179
heidi@schoolnewsrollcall.com
Kathy Gorman • 562/889-4843
kathy@schoolnewsrollcall.com

CONTENT COORDINATOR: Barbra Longiny
GRAPHIC DESIGNER: Meshel Negrete

COPY EDITORS:
Lisa Brock, Kate Karp & Anna Zappia

CONTRIBUTING CARTOONIST:
Netragednik by Neta Madison
P.B. & Chim by Robin Auwerd

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What All Parents Need to Know About Autism



Gary Feldman, MD

Medical Director,
Stramski
Children's
Developmental
Center

Autism is a spectrum disorder that affects certain individuals to varying degrees. Symptoms can emerge as early as 18 months and almost always start before a child is 3-years-old.

The Psychiatric community's DSM-V recently made changes to the criteria to encourage consistency in the field and reflect better the state of knowledge regarding autism.

There is no known single cause of autism; the positive side is autism is treatable. Children do not outgrow autism, but studies show that those who received early diagnosis and intervention (which can begin as early as 2-years-old) tend to have better brain function, communication skills and overall social behavior.

It's important for parents and families to look for autism warning signs in their child's development. The sooner autism is diagnosed, or ruled out; the faster children can receive needed care and treatment.

Communication signs

- Doesn't gesture or doesn't respond to pointing
- Echoes words/phrases or repeats
- Delayed speech
- Reverses pronouns (i.e., "you" instead of "I")

Behavior Signs

- Hand flapping
- Rituals with objects
- Tantrums when changes occur
- Restricted interests

Social Signs

- Unusual eye contact
- After 1 year does not respond to name
- Prefers to play alone
- Avoids or resists physical contact

It's important for parents and families to trust your instincts. It's never too early to get your child screened. For more information, contact the Stramski Children's Developmental Center at Miller Children's Hospital Long Beach at (562) 728-5034.



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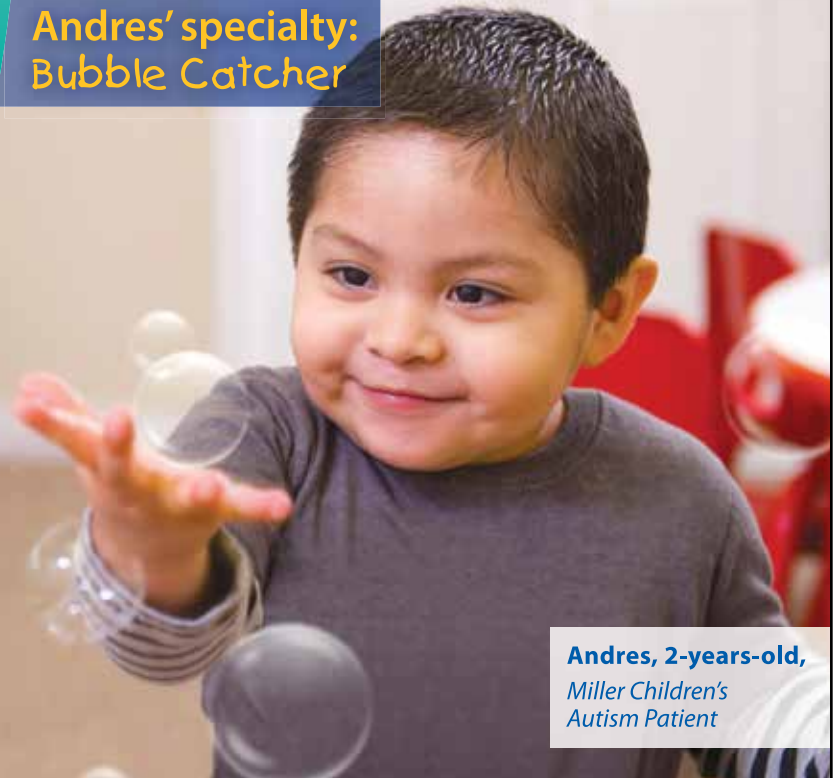
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Andres' specialty:
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Andres, 2-years-old,
Miller Children's
Autism Patient

When to Ignore Behavior



Kelly Rowe
Child Development
Coordinator/
Early Learning
Specialist

Ignoring challenging but minor behavior is a useful strategy in a positive behavior-guidance approach for preschool children. Unlike intervening every time a child's actions do not quite fit your expectations, ignoring allows you to concentrate on positive behaviors and remain focused on situations that truly need your attention. Using this strategy also allows young children to make discoveries about their own behavior and supports their emerging self-regulation skills.

Two common mistakes often observed with caregivers are attending to almost every inappropriate or disruptive behavior regardless of the significance of the behavior, and attempting to reduce inappropriate behavior by focusing time and attention on stepping in after a child enacts a disruptive behavior. By learning to focus attention, encouragement and time on the child when he or she is using appropriate behavior while at the same time ignoring certain inappropriate behavior, you avoid these serious mistakes and enhance your effectiveness.

Plan Your Strategies

To implement ignoring as a child-guidance strategy, plan ahead. Consider your environment and the individual strengths and needs of the child. Identify behavior that can be ignored in general and consider behavior of the child that you would like reduced. Ask yourself if the behavior poses a threat to other children, people or property; if it breaks a rule that has already been established; and if there is any urgent risk or concern in this behavior if it is repeated several times as you implement the new strategy. If you can answer no to those questions, ignoring the behavior can be effective and a wise use of your limited time and energy. If the answer is yes to even one of those questions, use a different approach to stop the child's behavior and develop a plan for teaching the child a more appropriate way to interact.

Think about how and when to encourage positive behavior and be direct about the positive behavior, e.g., "I really liked how you put your blocks on the shelf so nicely" instead of "Good job!" Tell the child exactly what positive behavior you want to encourage. If you use ignoring, you must also deliberately increase your attention on the child and others when they engage in positive behavior. You will be most successful when your interactions with the child are at least 90 percent positive.

To effectively use ignoring, you need to have a plan and do a lot of practice, but at the same time, it will relieve some of the stress of attending to every little thing a child does.

It is important to observe carefully to determine if using this strategy is effectively reducing the frequency of the child's inappropriate behavior. Patience and consistency are keys in any type of behavior change. In the beginning, expect to see a brief increase in the frequency of the behavior before it gets better.



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Andrea Reed
Principal

A New Daily Routine

This year the fourth-grade students at Hopkinson Elementary are participating in a 1:1 iPad pilot program. Some are bringing their own personal iPads to school with them, while others use a school-owned iPad to make 21st-century learning a reality.

Our teachers encourage the use of technology throughout the school day to increase engagement and ensure that students are ready for college and careers. Students now create movies to express content knowledge; utilize interactive Whiteboards to record their thinking; collaborate digitally with their peers; and explore the endless possibilities that can arise when instruction and technology merge.



Mr. Moretti's 4th grade classroom.

The 1:1 iPad pilot program will move up to the fifth grade with this class of students. Our ultimate goal is to have a 1:1 program operating in the third through fifth grades. With the move to the Common Core Standards, our staff feels it is imperative to embrace this digital future for our innovative students.

Laurel *High School*

3591 Cerritos Ave., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4820 • www.losal.org



Heidi Olshan
Principal

Eager for the Win

The theme for the spring semester at Laurel is, "All eyes on the prize!" And for our seniors, the ultimate prize is earning a high school diploma and then going to college.

Every six weeks during our "cycle awards," we honor those students who have earned the most credits toward their individual goals. We also honor students who have completed all of the requirements for a diploma for the year. So far, two of our seniors have graduated, and we have two more "in the wings" that we will add to the list any day now.

Our two graduates have transitioned beautifully from high school, too. One student is attending Golden West Community College, and the other began working full time hoping to save money and begin community college in the fall. Our next would-be graduates have positioned themselves similarly, and are preparing for college or work upon graduation.

For the Laurel students who never had the benefit of supported interventions early in high school, repairing credits can be a daunting, uphill battle. However, with structures in place, and lots of encouragement, they can learn the specific strategies to keep moving forward and complete their high school diplomas on time.

When our students graduate, they are prepared to tackle new challenges with the life skills they've learned at Laurel. Even though our senior class this year is very small, the prize is large. Our Laurel Knights are eager for the win!

Lee *Elementary*

11481 Foster Rd., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4540 • www.losal.org



Robert Briggerman
Principal

Awakening the Academic Mind through Music

Music and the arts are essential components of a well-rounded education. Research shows that students perform better academically when their school experience is enhanced by instruction in the arts.

Led by our beloved teacher, Coralie Prince, all students receive comprehensive music instruction weekly in rhythm, harmony, melody, expression, timbre, performance, the history of music, listening, and aesthetics. Additionally, all students participate in grade-level performances annually.

Lee also offers a fourth- and fifth-grade chorus program. Students meet weekly before school to prepare for school shows, the All District Choral Festival, various community events, and our annual school musical.

Our music program culminates with Special Person's Day in June. Students perform dances and songs from different countries for the special people they invited.

Students are challenged by rigorous academic standards and provided with opportunities to express their talents through the arts, supporting their success, self-esteem, and passion for life.



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Los Alamitos *Elementary*

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Dr. Sunghie Okino
Principal

LAE Speech Contestants Wow Judges

Twenty-one fourth and fifth grade students at Los Alamitos Elementary School sought to persuade or inform peers and judges at the annual speech contest. Unique topics

ranged from the symbolism of the apple to unplugging electronics. Community judges Mayor Gerri Graham-Mejia, Council Member Dean Grose, Police Chief Todd Mattern, and School Board Member Meg Cutuli commented on how difficult it was to narrow the field down to the top three due to the high quality of the speeches. After much deliberation, three winners were selected: First Place – Camille Sweeney-Carter (Taekwon-do); Second Place – Elijio Mondragon (fast food); and Third Place – Jin Swun (obsesity).



(Front) Lauren Kim, Nicole O'Connor, Nautica Gongloff, Abigail Deinert, Alexandria Magana
(Middle) Irene Song, Ryan Fell, Camille Carter-Sweeney(1st), Elijio Mondragon (2nd), Jin Swun (3rd), Hugh Kowalewski, Kennedy Butler.
(Third Row) Dr. Okino, Cash Koepke, Kaylin Hurley, Hritik Sharma, Moses Navarro, Grace Masura, Tayor Reece, Abigail Riley.
(Top Row) Dr. Okino, Cash Koepke, Chief Mattern, Mayor Graham-Mejia, Board Member Meg Cutuli, Council Member Dean Grose.
Not pictured: Nina Lu, Tyler White

Los Alamitos *High School*

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



Dr. Joshua Arnold
Principal

How Common Core Brings Out the Collaboration in All of Us

Teaching can be an isolating profession at times. Thankfully, the implementation of Common Core State Standards is bringing out the collaboration in all of us these days. With everyone tasked to shift curriculum and instruction to incorporate deeper, more rigorous, and connected tasks for students across content areas, teachers are interested in learning what their colleagues are doing to modify instructional practices. This has meant longer sharing sessions in department meetings and professional development across campus. The result is a framework for math and English instruction that will put Los Alamitos students at the head of the pack when it comes to college and career opportunities.

This is what's so exciting about doing something new. We all get to do it together.



McGaugh *Elementary*

1698 Bolsa Ave., Seal Beach, CA 90740 • 562/799-4560 • www.losal.org



Dr. Jerry Gargus
Principal

Read Across America Day

On Monday, March 3, McGaugh Elementary School celebrated Read Across America Day in style! Our incredibly talented second-graders started the morning with two outstanding performances of *Seussical the Musical*. They energized a packed house by performing a collection of songs that honored the works of children's author Theodore Geisel, whom we all know as Dr. Seuss.

Each McGaugh classroom was also joined by a "guest reader" who read aloud from a selection by Dr. Seuss. The level of support that McGaugh receives from our community was on full display, as dignitary readers included Mayor Ellery Deaton, Police Chief Joe Stilinovich, and LAUSD Board Members Meg Cutuli and Karen Russell. They were joined by representatives from the U.S. Military, the Seal Beach Chamber of Commerce, the Orange County Fire Authority, the Seal Beach Police Department, and the Seal Beach Lions Club!

One of the guest readers from the Los Alamitos Joint Forces Training Base, Sgt. Thomas Minter, is a parent of two McGaugh students. He explained that, "The students were thrilled to listen to a story that they had heard many times from someone new. They could tell we wanted to be involved in their education. It was great to see so many members of the community, including first responders and civil servants, stepping up to support McGaugh."

Special thanks are in order for Suzanne McElderry, McGaugh's incredibly talented music teacher, and Jill Robinson, our dedicated first-grade teacher. They coordinated a great Read Across America Day at McGaugh Elementary School!

McAuliffe *Middle School*

4112 Cerritos Ave., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 714/816-3320 • www.losal.org



Ann Allen
Principal

Students Chosen to Attend CAG Conference

In February, 15-eighth graders attended the California Association for the Gifted (CAG) Conference. USC's Dr. Sandra Kaplan, a renowned educator of the gifted and talented, invited our students to participate in model classrooms, where they spent three rigorous hours. As they worked on presentations that reflected thinking with depth and complexity, over 70 teachers from all over Southern California observed and interacted with them. As reported by their teacher, Marlys Davidson, our students were remarkable in this high-pressure situation!

All this couldn't have occurred without the leadership of Dr. Mark Johnson, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction. Dr. Johnson has provided teachers with the training and support needed to implement Dr. Kaplan's unique strategies at McAuliffe and across the district, all for the benefit of our students.

At the closing of the day, Dr. Kaplan and her presenters said that they wished they could teach these incredible young people every day! Here at McAuliffe, we can!



Oak *Middle School*

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



Sally Neiser
Principal

Presenting the Showmen!

What do you get when you take 62 active preadolescent boys, put them together in one room, and play loud music? Pandemonium? No, not at all! You get Showmen, one of the largest boys show choirs at the middle school level.

Showmen was formed in 2009 as an offshoot of a growing vocal music program at Oak. Since then, they have increased in number every year and more importantly have greatly increased in skill and talent. This committed group of young men has daily rehearsals that focus on singing, dancing, reading music and teamwork. The many trophies and accolades they've been awarded are outstanding examples of the success that is earned through hard work and cooperation. Additionally, the boys frequently receive standing ovations when they perform, as their unique brand of talent, enthusiasm and positive energy is absolutely contagious and brings people to their feet.

Oak is very proud of the Showmen and other show choirs at Oak that will represent us at numerous competitions this year.



Oak Middle School's 2013-14 Men's Choir, Showmen.

Rossmoor *Elementary*

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



Kiva Spiratos
Principal

The Butterfly Reading Garden

With the state's adoption of the Common Core Standards, it will be necessary to build a learning culture that focuses on fluency and reading skills so that we can prepare students for college and careers in the 21st century. Today's students will be reading more informational text than any generation before them, and will also be required to support their research with persuasive writing and evidence.

Rossmoor's goal for its community of learners is to promote a love for reading. Our generous parents and community businesses have thus been contributing reading benches, fruit trees, pottery and garden plants to help create our Butterfly Reading Garden on Montecito Street.



The community is coming together to plant the garden and help create a beautiful setting for our students to indulge their passion for reading. Our Rossmoor Butterfly Reading Garden will be a stepping stone to a life-long love of reading.

Weaver *Elementary*

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



Erin Kominsky
Principal

Teachers Teaching Teachers

Each year Weaver Elementary School teachers host over 500 visitors to observe demonstration lessons in Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) in mathematics, depth and complexity, science, and language arts. Our visitors come from as far away as Chicago!

CGI is a philosophy built on over 30 years of research. The philosophy focuses on problem solving through a variety of problem types and solution strategies. Students work collaboratively to solve rigorous multi-step problems that connect to current Common Core State Standards. In our classrooms, teachers utilize depth and complexity to help students dig deeper into understanding mathematical concepts.

At Weaver, our practice of CGI is 16 years strong and continues to change and develop along with the new standards. Visitors have a chance to watch a lesson and debrief with the teachers afterwards. We are proud of the efforts our staff and students make to help change instructional practices across the nation.



Students are working to solve a CGI problem while visiting teachers and administrators look on.

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Sean Whittle
Branch Manager

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We also have a general e-book and e-audiobook service called Overdrive, which now has over 10,000 volumes. These are in all

the popular formats and a variety of genres and age levels. There have been many improvements to this service, and it's easier than ever to get started.

We even have Mango, a language-learning program with 61 language options. Think of a language and it's here. Mango's interactive, and will help you or your young one get off to a good start. Studying for school? Going on a trip soon? Want to tap into your heritage? Think Mango!

Finally, we have Zinio, a magazine service in full color with full-page spreads. There are over 50 titles available, like *Newsweek*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Motor Trend*, etc.

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Buy One Get One Flea, Dog on Fleas



Kate Karp

For some time, creators and performers of young people's music have been dispensing with the cheap, synthetic sound of electronic tracks and replacing them with real live instruments. I'm surely not the only one who's delighted beyond words. Dog on Fleas is one of the groups that plays in its own band, called the Backyard Orchestra; the combo includes but is not limited to a sousaphone, duck calls, a bass drum, a bassoon, a clarinet and several kazoos. The wacky instrumentation and the wordplayful monikers of group and band indicate one slaphappily good CD.

The content is composed of songs original, familiar and obscure. Imagine, if you will, "Over the Waves" and the "Grand March" from the opera *Aida* played solely by kazoos, albeit skillfully. The original songs, written by Grammy Award-winning producer and band member Dean Jones, are based on themes that both child and parent will appreciate. "Hundredaires" is about the joys and disadvantages of a simpler life and a lighter wallet. "It's a Ruse" warns about things that seem too good to be true and likely are. "Pardon My Pajamas"—well, who hasn't longed to spend an entire day in jammies?

And "Hinterlands" is plain wonderful—brilliantly arranged and tuneful, with an energy that you can jump on and ride. You're certain to get an itch for Fleadom.

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

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Your New Kitten

By Murlyn E. Burkes, Cat Committee Liaison

Whenever you bring home a new pet, it is an exciting time. You can look forward to lots of love and fun for many years to come.

If you really want to make the best of having a new kitten, plan to stay home with your new pet for the first day. Help your other pets, if you have any, roll out the welcome mat, too. Always make sure that your new kitten has a safe place. Provide a separate room where the kitten will have food, water, litter, toys, and a scratching post. The room will allow you private time with your new companion and allow the kitten to feel comfortable in one part of the house. Give your pet at least a week in this safe place.

Supervise closely and give individual attention to your new kitten. A new kitten will need lots of time to settle into a home. Avoid unnecessary stress on your new kitten. It's a great idea to share responsibilities with other family members, if there are some, by allowing them to feed, provide water and to clean the litter box. Make sure that the litter box is easy to find and in a quiet place.

Play with your kitten every day. Remember not to leave out toys that have feathers or other parts that might come off easily. Interactive play is the best way to tire out your pal. You can teach a kitten to retrieve if you use something that is easy to carry and it is a regular part of their play. Don't be surprised if they don't bring it back after a few times.

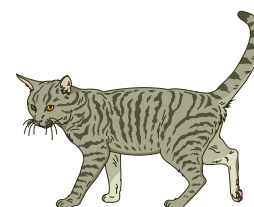
Now, go and enjoy your new kitten for many years to come. They do grow up quickly!



Domestic Cat 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 **school district** in subject line)



Entries must be received by April 30, 2014

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

- | | | |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Abyssinian | Himalayan | Russian Blue |
| Balinese | Korat | Shorthair |
| Birman | Maine Coon | Siamese |
| Burmese | Manx | Tabby |
| Egyptian Mau | Persian | Turkish Angora |
| Havana Brown | Rex | Wirehair |

**Congratulations to Richard Vardeman
Winner of the February Word Search Contest!**

B	Q	H	E	G	Y	P	T	I	A	N	M	A	U	N
D	I	M	G	O	B	G	N	T	J	W	R	X	E	I
Y	Q	R	C	N	A	S	Q	P	T	O	A	U	I	A
B	F	W	M	D	L	B	G	N	G	R	L	N	S	C
K	W	K	W	A	I	E	V	N	R	B	S	A	H	C
N	O	O	C	E	N	I	A	M	N	A	M	I	O	R
H	B	R	M	G	E	H	E	A	D	N	M	S	R	I
R	W	A	B	Y	S	S	I	N	I	A	N	R	T	P
H	R	T	H	I	E	S	Y	X	L	V	I	E	H	E
L	N	E	K	M	S	L	P	A	H	A	V	P	A	G
Q	R	R	R	U	Z	A	Y	R	H	H	Z	I	I	Z
X	U	U	R	S	I	A	M	E	S	E	S	F	R	E
T	B	K	Z	E	N	K	R	X	O	T	X	O	T	R
P	I	K	H	M	T	I	C	U	V	E	S	W	U	C
L	U	A	R	T	W	O	C	U	Z	C	N	K	E	F

Saving the World



Lauren Barrette

Friends and family from the U.S. congratulate me for saving the world. When I come home to visit I am introduced by my friends to new people like this: "Look! This is that girl I told you about! Tell us a story about saving the world!" My mind goes blank.

As I sit here day after day, frustrated with lack of results, I just shake my head at the misconception my friends at home have of my work. Or am I the one who is wrong? Is it possible that my results are invisible to my untrained eyes?

My aunt told me a simple story that led me to believe that maybe I am wrong. She told me how she used to talk to her daughter (my cousin) about the joys of reading and recommend book after book that my cousin never took interest in. Years later, my cousin became an avid reader "on her own." That, my aunt informed me, is how education works.

I contemplated that for a long time and decided I needed to do something. I would like to acknowledge two teachers from Los Alamitos High school that particularly left a lasting impact on me. My first message is for Mrs. Grimshaw, my AP U.S. History teacher from 9 years ago. Mrs. Grimshaw, you taught me how to be an independent learner and the importance of digging deeper to find the truth behind history. I still use tactics from your class to analyze and think critically about world development issues that likely contributed to my position here in the Peace Corps today. I never told you this, but thank you Mrs. Grimshaw. My second message is for Mrs. Kaulig, my Spanish teacher throughout high school. Mrs. Kaulig made learning Spanish fun. If I had not fallen in love with Spanish, I would never have gone to Spain, never worked at a Spanish immersion camp, never traveled throughout Latin America, and never ended up in Peace Corps Nicaragua. You changed the course of my life Mrs. Kaulig, thank you. So what is the truth after all, am I changing the world? I guess I'll have to wait and find out.

Los Alamitos High School Class of 2006. Studied Business Administration with a concentration in marketing at the University of Oregon Class of 2010. Joined the peace corps after college.

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