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School News

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Covering the Los Alamitos Unified School District



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October / November 2021



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Committed to Student Success



Dr. Andrew Pulver
Superintendent

Fall is here, and we have embarked on what I already know will be another blockbuster school year! It is a privilege to work in Los Al with outstanding staff and for a Board of Education that is committed to providing the very best opportunities for students. Each year, the Board of Education meets to assess our current needs, review a variety of data from the previous year and sharpen a collective vision for the new year. We use this information to update our District Priority Goals. The Board ensures that the goals represent what our families want for their children, what our community wants from its schools, and what our teachers and staff need to continue their exemplary work. Our theme continues to be Better Together as we believe working together and embracing our unity makes us and our District community stronger. The five priority goals include:

1. Passionately pursue academic excellence from all students by providing unparalleled preparation for College and Career Success.
2. Cultivate a thriving culture that ensures a caring, inclusive, equitable, safe and student-centered environment.
3. Foster collaborative relationships and partnerships with students, families, staff and the community.
4. Provide high quality facilities to meet the educational and instructional needs of students and staff.
5. Manage and allocate financial resources to maximize students' educational experiences.

Additionally, we identified four core values (Care, Responsibility, Equity and Commitment) as part of our Priority Goals. You can view the full version of our Priority Goals and Core Values at <https://www.losal.org/our-district/district-priority-goals>.

We are passionately committed to cultivating a thriving culture for all students filled with kindness, compassion, empathy, and respect for one another. We want students and families to feel welcome on our campuses and know that we embrace and value them as part of our Los Al Family. We know that the more we learn and listen to other peoples' experiences and perspectives, the more we understand how better to serve our community. We believe that students thrive and achieve at their best when they are emotionally, socially and physically, safe. We have increased our team of mental health therapists and wellness counselors who along with our counselors and psychologist are available to support our students at each site. We have added WellSpaces at both our middle schools and are in the process of creating a WellSpace at Los Alamitos High School. The WellSpace centers encourage students to take a break from life's daily stressors in thoughtfully designed, supervised environments that are safe, calming, and supportive.

Each year brings a new set of challenges and success. I am confident that through the exceptional skills of our staff, the visionary leadership of our Board, and the unfailing support from our community, we will meet them and continue to be Better and Stronger Together!



Kay Coop
Founder/Publisher



Netragrednik

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Covering the

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Welcome back to another school year. It is always exciting to start a new school year, but this year is especially exciting for students.

Dr. Pulver begins this issue with his message on page 3 informing of the District's priority goals and four core values.

In this issue you will read about two schools being recognized as National Blue Ribbon Schools, Mental Health Awareness, activities keeping students connected to campus life, Peace Week and much more.

Our next issue is December 8, 2021.



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High Blood Pressure Increasing in Kids & Teens



Saar Danon, M.D.,
medical director,
Pediatric Cardiology
and Congenital
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Long Beach

Obesity and sedentary lifestyles were already on the rise in kids and teens before the pandemic. During the pandemic, sports were sidelined, and families were encouraged to stay inside, furthering the problem. As a result, we are now seeing an increase in obesity and associated medical problems, including high blood pressure in kids.

There are many things that can contribute to high blood pressure, including:

- Overweight and obesity
- Unhealthy diet
- Lack of exercise and sedentary lifestyle
- Mental health issues
- Endocrine disorders
- Use of Illegal drugs

One of the best ways to prevent or treat obesity and high blood pressure, is by encouraging exercise and a healthy diet. The pandemic has led to a new level of mental and emotional stress, which has been worsened by isolation and lack of personal interaction with others. This has increased the prevalence of high blood pressure, which can lead to other long-term effects if not addressed.

Steps Parents Can Take to Reduce High Blood Pressure in Kids & Teens

- Change their diet – fill plates with veggies, fruits, lean protein and limit fatty and salty foods
- Encourage kids to go outside and exercise a minimum of one hour each day
- Help your child learn to cope with stress and emotions
- Encourage interactions with other children

Often, we focus on the physical health of a child and forget that their mental health could be a major factor for their physical health. It's critical to address mental health issues as well. Learn more at millerchildrens.org/Heart.



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Teens, Teens, Teens!

By Murlyn E. Burkes, Cat Committee Liaison

Teen felines are the best of both worlds. They still have the youthful spunk of kittens along with more fully developed personalities.

When adopting a teen, you can get a much better idea of whether the cat will grow up to be a lap cat, an independent investigator, a playful cat who will never outgrow their toys, and so on. This way you still get a cute baby animal, and a much better idea of how you can expect him or her to mature throughout the rest of their life of 15-20 years.

Meet Hans, one of many teen kittens at the shelter. He and his three brothers were about three weeks old when they were rescued from an overcrowded shelter. He was in pretty bad shape; he had fleas and a respiratory infection. But these three went directly to foster care and were soon nursed back to good health.

Hans' foster mom said that he is one of the most affectionate kittens she has ever fostered. He loves his brother, Harrison, and they play with one another all the time. Hans is almost seven months old now.



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Cassandra Sargent
Branch Manager

The Library is open

We're back to our old hours! Give us a call or stop by Monday - Thursday 10:00am — 7:00pm and Saturday 9:00am – 5:00p. We will continue to offer curbside services, monthly grab 'n go crafts, and zoom storytimes.

Pumpkin Decorating— Thursday, Oct 28th 10:00am-1:00pm or 3:00pm-6:00pm

BYO pumpkin and drop in to carve or decorate it at the library. We'll have paint, glitter, glue and more so you can really get creative! Open to ages 4-12.

Family Storytime — Saturdays 10:30am

Join our enthusiastic team for stories, songs, rhymes, flannels, and giggles. Ages 6 and below.

Kindergarten Readiness Backpacks — OC Public

Libraries has Kindergarten Readiness backpacks for checkout, to support families on their path to school readiness! A total of 13 themed backpacks have been created by the Kindergarten Readiness committee. Each backpack includes two books, manipulatives, and a laminated activity sheet with rhymes and fingerplays, information about early learning concepts, and suggestions for how to use the contents to make learning fun.

Themes include: Alphabet, Community, Math, Feelings, Science, Physical Wellness, Seasons, Three Little Pigs, and more!

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**CathyLyn
Brooks**

A Stepped-Up Basis?

For nearly 100 years, upon the date of a person's death, many of the decedent's assets have been assessed at their current market value. The purpose of the regulation has been to simplify establishing the value of an estate for taxation, and to enable the government to collect the maximum amount of taxes, as the estate shows a greater monetary value than if the calculations were based on the "cost basis" of the assets.

For example, if a home is purchased in 1970 for \$50,000 and upon the death of the owner in 2021 the value is \$850,000, the "basis" in that property is, quite generally speaking, the original price paid for the property, plus the value of improvements made. If the property is willed to a beneficiary, such as a child, relative, or friend the property is inherited at the "stepped-up basis" of \$850,000. If the property is sold close to the time it is inherited, the capital gains are virtually nothing, as the market value and the basis are essentially the same.

This provides tax relief for the beneficiary, while increasing the value of the estate for the government to maximize inheritance taxes. However, since the current value of an estate subject to estate tax must exceed several million dollars, repeal of this tax treatment would leave beneficiaries with the original purchase price as a basis and the tax burden on the beneficiaries, most often family members, will be significant. In the example above, the taxable amount will be approximately \$800,000. Elimination of this provision may force the sale of more assets as beneficiaries may need to liquidate holdings to cover taxes due.

This stepped up basis tax treatment applies to real estate, stocks, bonds, mutual funds, businesses, and equipment but not IRA's, 401(K)'s, pensions, tax deferred annuities, money market, and CD accounts. The death of a spouse can also engage the use of this tax provision if title is held in a certain fashion. *

*For more specifics, please seek legal and tax advice, as this column is not intended to instruct on these matters.

CathyLyn Brooks, CRS, GRI has worked as a real estate broker since 1980, is a graduate of USC, the UCI Paralegal Program, and serves FINRA as a public arbitrator. She holds Broker's License No. 00797147 and is affiliated with United Real Estate Professionals in southern California. Consumers should seek legal and tax advice pertaining to their transactions. She can be reached at real.estate.matters@outlook.com



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Hopkinson *Elementary*

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Evelyn Garcia
Principal

Fostering Community

Our Hopkinson Huskies have started the year off strong by aiming high and dreaming big!

The fifth-grade Leadership Council has been making a huge impact on our school community by hosting Peace Week. We had community-building Peace Week virtual assemblies, led by our fifth-grade leaders, that allowed students from all grade levels to listen to the same message. We read books, watched videos, and participated in activities all week. Across campus, our students also learned the importance of compassion, acceptance, and inclusion of all people.

At Hopkinson, we foster a close community. In an effort to actively spread kindness, we like to encourage everyone to participate in sharing a positive Post-It note with their teachers, fellow students, and support staff. Kindness is important, and it starts with a simple “Hello.” Our hope is that this will serve as a lesson that demonstrates the ease of increasing kindness in our world.



What our Huskies have discovered is that it is not only rewarding to receive a note, but writing a note is just as gratifying. It’s a small gesture that goes a long way! A huge thank-you to our teacher-leader Mrs. Angie Haas for leading our wonderful week.



Lee Elementary

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



Amy Vento
Principal

Congratulations!

On September 21st, Lee School was recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an “Exemplary High Performing School,” and a winner of the National Blue Ribbon School Award! This award is education’s highest honor, and Team Lee is proud to be sharing it with the entire community.

Lee Elementary School is committed to engaging students, empowering all learners, and igniting curiosity in every child. Daily, our teachers and students are reminded that, “We can do hard things!” Dedication, hard work, and perseverance all contribute to our students’ success. We strive to instill a growth mindset in our students, allowing our learners the opportunity to face challenges. We believe that learning takes grit, and if it doesn’t challenge you, it doesn’t change you!

Every single staff member, family member, and student played a part in earning this award. Each member of our “FamiLee” helped our Leos achieve socially, emotionally, and academically. Thank you, FamiLee! Team Lee gladly shares this prestigious recognition with you.

Congratulations goes to our families, our staff, and especially, our Leos!



Los Alamitos High School

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



Christiana Kraus
Principal

‘Be the Good’

After a year of pandemic and severe isolation for students at every level, the district has prioritized mental-health wellness for all students. Through partnerships with CHOC Hospital, Orange County Department of Education and LAEF, the district has implemented intentional practices for wellness education and a safe environment to retreat to on campus.

With the addition of these added resources, a team of licensed therapists and credentialed counselors are leading the districtwide wellness initiatives. Their primary focus is to develop and implement proactive lessons on wellness and social-emotional learning. At the high school level, our theme for the year is “Believe There Is Good in the World,” which translates for all stakeholders to “Be the Good.” We want to ensure that we are modeling the expectations of balance that we ask our students to have in our own daily practices and behaviors.

Our focus on wellness has aligned with themes that are centered around social-emotional health. Our site wellness coordinator has partnered with our ASB students to promote activities that not only foster school spirit but also include mindful health and wellness activities. Each month, we are promoting wellness challenges for staff in addition to students. These challenges are added to our weekly staff and student newsletters and are celebrated through photos, incentives and rewards. During Peace Week, we included wellness lunch activities for all staff and students, including mindful meditation techniques, yoga, friendshipgrams, peace wall pledges, and interactive games and activities.

Our goal is to ensure that every student and faculty member is intentionally practicing self-care throughout their day at school. Stay tuned for more interactive and mindful ways to stay connected, foster peaceful practices, and balance your daily schedule.

Los Alamitos *Elementary*

10862 Bloomfield St., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4700 • lae.losal.org



Gary Willems
Principal

National Blue Ribbon

It is my honor to announce that LAE has been recognized with education's Highest Honor by winning the National Blue Ribbon for Closing the Achievement Gap. This is the second time LAE has ever won this award and the first time in the last 21 years. The Federal government states:

"The coveted National Blue Ribbon School award affirms the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in

creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging and engaging content."

Our entire LAE staff, parents/extended families, the custodian and front office personnel, the instructional aides and teachers, are all devoted to help our TIGERS achieve socially, emotionally, and academically. LAE has increased its proficiency on the CAASPP by 72 points in the last four years, which is why the Federal Government bestowed this award upon LAE.

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Stripes helps LAE celebrate winning the National Blue Ribbon

McAuliffe Middle School

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



Dr. Ryan Weiss-Wright
Principal

Keeping All Kids Connected!

McAuliffe students and staff are so excited to be back on campus for a regular school year. In our first couple months of school, we have been fortunate to bring back many things that help keep all middle school students connected to campus life. Students have already competed in their first round of intramural sports, Punt/Pass/Kick, and have moved into Intramural Football. We are also thrilled to bring back over 40 school clubs for students to join based on student interest--middle schoolers love old favorites like Best Buddies, Make a Wish, and CJSF and have also worked with teachers to create some new clubs, like Improv Club, Dead



Poet's Society, and Kick Flip Club. We know how critical it is for students to reconnect with school this year and we are so happy to see them getting plugged in different ways!



McGaugh *Elementary*

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



Dr. Issaic Gates
Principal

Developing Inclusivity

McGaugh's Sea Lions have had a great start to the year! While being safe and adhering to the COVID-19 guidance, the Sea Lions kicked off the year with a PBIS school assembly. PBIS at McGaugh provides much-needed continuity to our school-community agreements and best practices that impact students' everyday social-emotional, academic and behavioral outcomes.

McGaugh Elementary closed out the month of September by recognizing Peace Week. During Peace Week, students participated in engaging lessons and activities designed to increase their awareness, understanding and ability to manage conflict and foster peace within their own lives and communities.

We welcomed Brent Poppen. Mr. Poppen is an author, a substitute teacher, a counselor, an international

motivational speaker and a Paralympian. He connected with students and staff to share his story of grit and perseverance after suffering a sports accident at age 16. The accident caused a spinal-cord injury that left him a quadriplegic.

McGaugh concluded Peace Week with Come Walk In My Shoes. Come Walk in My Shoes is a day when teachers and parents partner to facilitate schoolwide lessons and activities to teach our students about individual differences as part of building an inclusive culture. The lessons were designed to teach students to understand one another's differences as a part of building an inclusive culture. The goal was to teach students through language and experiences that it is OK to identify differences instead of pretending those differences don't exist, which is important when developing students' empathy and kindness.

Weaver *Elementary*

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



Dr. Todd Schmidt
Principal

Vision Realized!

With the start of the school year and our students back full time, the #WeAreWeaver community came together to realize a very big vision: updating and upgrading our media center, library and STEAM lab. Through generous donations from our Friends of Weaver (FOW), Weaver PTA and the LAUSD District Office, we were able to modernize the space to make it more flexible, more welcoming and more engaging to all of our students. We not only brought in new paint and carpet but also were able to create a flexible learning environment with new technology and new furniture.

With an emphasis on literacy and celebrating the joy of reading, our library was revamped and is now a space where students can relax, enjoy a good book, or hear a wonderful story from our amazing library tech, Mrs. Cordova.

Finally, with the addition of our new STEAM teacher, Ms. Burney, our students are now in a space where they can discover and pursue their interests in all areas of science, technology, engineering, art and math!



Oak Middle School

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



Erin Kominsky
Principal

Club Rush

Oak Middle School students had a joyful return to school on August 16th. We are off to a great start with rigorous and purposeful instruction and many opportunities for students to connect at school. Our club rush introduced over 30 clubs on campus for students to join. Clubs include E-sports, Improv, Running club, Scholarship club,

Science Olympiad, Math Counts, American Sign Language and so much more! In addition, our Well Space called the Den is also open daily to support student mental health. Staffed by our school counselors, The Den offers a variety of activities for students before, during and after school. Mindful movement and guided meditation workshops are held each week, along with classes on helping to tame anxiety. We are excited for our new school year. Imagine the possibilities we will have this year being back on campus together again! Hear us Roar Oak Lions!





Amy Coltey
Principal

We have School Spirit!

Our Knights and staff are thrilled to be back together again in person! At Rossmoor, each of our Knights is sorted into one of our fearless-four Knights' Houses: House of

Galahad for courage, House of Gawain for loyalty, House of Lancelot for integrity, and House of Percival for resiliency.

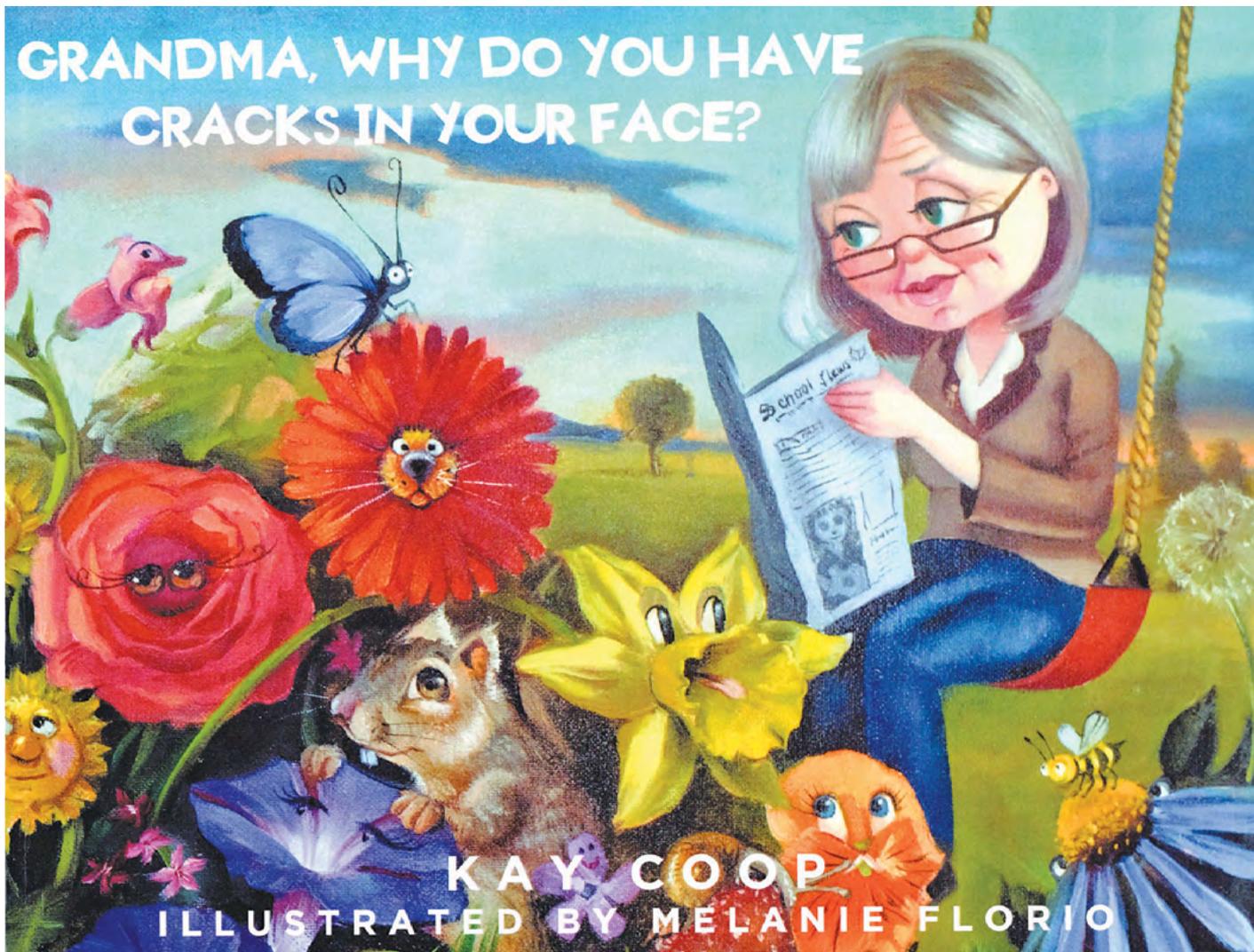
After the sorting, our Knights had their first house meeting and were able to meet Big and Little Buddies that were in their same houses. They worked together to create a shield promise or goal for the year that focuses on the *P* in Knight PRIDE: Positive words and actions. They also learned their house cheer that they will chant when we gather together in our spirit assemblies.

Our Rossmoor House System is a fantastic way for us to build school culture while supporting Knight PRIDE across campus. Our school community works together to create ways to motivate students in achieving within the four A's: academics, athletics, activities and the arts both inside and outside the classroom. This is done through fun and exciting house competitions, thus affording opportunities to create smaller communities within our larger school community.

We work together to create a sense of community and camaraderie while building strong relationships across all stakeholders on campus.



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