Covering the La Habra City School District

Volume 9, Issue 26 February 2023

Spreading Kindness



Students at Las Lomas!



Spring Family **A**Eggstravaganza

Helicopter Easter Egg Drop

8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

- La Bonita Park -1440 W. Whittier Blvd., La Habra

EGG HUNT WRISTBAND FEES:

- \$8 per person presale until 5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 7th, at the Community Center

- \$10 per person on the day of the event





EGG NIGHT

LATE NIGHT EGG HUNT

Friday, April 7, 2023 7:00-8:00 p.m.

La Bonita Park - 1440 W. Whittier Blvd., La Habra

\$10 per person
Open to kids ages 7-13 years



REGISTER HERE



Online fees apply

Pre-registration is required.

Tickets will not be available at the event.

KIDS NIGHT OUT

A NIGHT JUST FOR THE KIDS! JOIN US FOR A FUN-FILLED EVENING FEATURING DINNER, SNACKS, GAMES, CRAFTS, AND A MOVIE!

MARCH 24, 2023 - LUCKY CHARMS



6:00 to 10:30 P.M.at the La Habra Community Center



Online fees apply

LIMITED SPACE, REGISTER EARLY. PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.

Croowy 70'S FAMILY FUN RUN

SK Run/Wa<mark>lk - 1K Kiddy Run -</mark> 50-YD. Diaper Dash

MARCH II

at the La Habra Marketplace
(Between Famous Footwear & La Habra Modern Dentistry)

T-SHIRT, MEDAL, & GOODIE BAG FOR ALL FINISHERS

SPECIAL SCHOOL RATE FOR STUDENTS, STAFF AND FAMILIES!!! - HOW TO REGISTER: Turn in payment and entry form to your school office by March 2nd!

• **50-Yard Diaper Dash** (ages 3-5 years)

\$10 Special Rate

(Regular price \$15-\$20)

• 1K Kiddy Run (ages 5-9 years)

\$15 Special Rate

(Regular price \$20-\$25)

5K Run/Walk

\$15 Special Rate

(Regular price \$30-\$35)



EVENT SCHEDULE

7:30 a.m. - 50-YD. Diaper Dash

7:40 a.m. - 1K Kiddy Run

8:00 a.m. - 5K Run

8:45 a.m. - Awards

AWARDS:

Top 3 Male & Female 5K Runners Top 3 Male & Female 1K Runners Largest Group Largest School Group Most Groovily Dressed Individual Runner

Most Groovily Dressed Group



La Habra Races

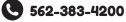
TO REGISTER AND FOR MORE DETAILS ON EVENTS AND PROGRAMS, VISIT US AT:











LH Community Center: 101 W. La Habra Blvd.

Board of Education



Ofelia Hanson President



Emily Pruitt Clerk / Vice President



Susan Kolberg-Pritchard, Ph.D. Member



Adam **Rogers** Member



Cynthia Aguirre Member



Dr. Mario A. **Carlos** Superintendent

Continue to Dream Big and Shine Bright!

At La Habra City School District (LHCSD), we continue to Dream Big and Shine Bright! Preparing our students to be ready for college and future jobs that are currently being created, is our goal. Everyday there are new technology advances and new challenges ready to be discovered by our students. We want our students to dig deep into their learning in order to successfully navigate their futures.

Tomorrow's leaders, more than ever, will face great challenges. They will face a world where they will need to work closely across geographic boundaries, collaborate, and seek solutions for real world problems. In LHCSD, our instructional programs are designed to prepare our students with a mindset for taking on inspiring learning and be able to give explanations of the learning. Our classrooms are filled with opportunities for independent learning and high collaboration. We are creating respectful citizens, expanding cultural awareness, and becoming ready and responsible citizens.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, LHCSD will continue to develop students for a brighter future, while empowering our families along the journey. We will continue to Dream Big and Shine Bright for our students.

:: Carbon Health

When Life Throws You a Curveball, Carbon Health **Urgent Care Is There**

- √ Primary Care ✓ Urgent Care
- ✓ Sports Physicals
- √ X-ray and Labs ✓ Covid, RSV / Flu Testing
- √ Same-day appointments
- √ Walk-ins welcome





Convenient Locations

- Orange County
- · Long Beach
- The South Bay





Dr. Carlos begins this issue on

and Shine Bright! Students have so

many academic opportunities today

than their parents and grandparents.

difficult for adults seems so simple to

children. I overheard a teenager say

to his friend, "I remember when..."

children how to do something on a

computer or phone. What is often

and their world is vastly different

Most parents have asked their

page 3 with his message of Dream Big





The world is changing rapidly and it is encouraging to know educators are focused on preparing our children for their future. You'll want to find a comfy chair

and plan to read awhile. This issue is full of information and as you read you can feel the excitement in the classrooms.

Be sure to enter our word search contest on page 7 (all ages may enter). Our next issue is April 12.



Netragrednik



School News

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500 N. Walnut St., La Habra, CA 90631 • 562/690-2305 www.lahabraschools.org



Emily Flesher Director Special Programs & Assessment

Science Learning

As part of the La Habra City School District's Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP), all students have the opportunity to participate in

activities and events beyond the regular school day. One of the field trips has been to the Newport Sea Base for a fun-filled day of science learning. Students participated in three different learning stations. In the first station, students

gathered and observed plankton and other seadwelling organisms by scooping sea water into small containers attached to magnifying glasses. They also examined mussels, sea squirts, and crabs using field tools and underwater cameras. Students became Ocean Hazard Engineers in their second station as they tested and analyzed different materials and methods to clean up simulated ocean oil spills, and then they created an invention to effectively clean the ocean without harming the environment. In the last station, students boarded a pontoon boat

and glided through the Newport bay, using binoculars to observe the different birds that live in the area. Students recorded whether they observed the birds in the sky, on the beach, or on the water.



Students observe and record information about birds in Newport Harbor.



Repair Services Menu



Watches • Rings • Gemstones Engraving & Personalization • Earrings Bracelets • Chains • Pearl Re-stringing



1510 W. Imperial Hwy., Ste E, La Habra, CA 90631 562. 697. 7464 beyondtworings.com



District Wellness

500 N. Walnut St., La Habra, CA 90632 • 562/690-2344x302 www.lahabraschools.org



Jessica Stout-Ryder Lead

Fit Kids Room

The La Habra City School District, in partnership with St. Jude Medical Center, shines bright and dreams big through continued focus on improving the nutritional and physical health of students and families of La Habra. Through our continued partnership with St. Jude, our Elementary School Fit Kid Rooms received updated equipment, nutritional materials, and additional physical activity resources. These

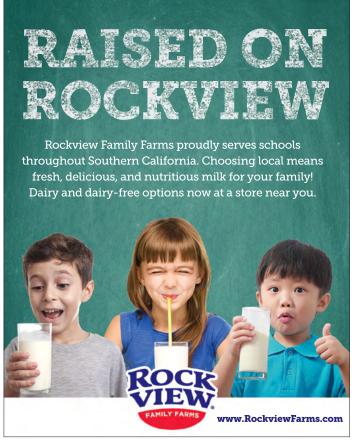
rooms continue to supplement additional physical activity time for our students. Additionally, our Nutritional Services department will be receiving large lunchroom banners. These banners will provide positive nutritional imagery, making a strong visual impact on students and brightening up school lunchrooms.

LHCSD is bringing back the Harvest of the Month Program. Beginning in February, all K-6th grade students will have lessons on various fruits and vegetables. Students will be provided pre-packaged samples to taste at school or take them home to enjoy. This is a great opportunity for students to try fruits and vegetables they might not otherwise be exposed to.

Finally, our community liaisons continue working hard to support our families through partnerships with community organizations such as Shoes that Fit, Operation School Bell, Operation Warm, Holiday Wishes, and The National Giving Alliance. These organizations provide much needed shoes, coats, and school clothes for our families. Las Positas, Washington Middle School and El Cerrito continue to serve close to 150 families through monthly food distributions through Second Harvest Food Bank.







School Readiness

301 W. Las Lomas Dr., La Habra, CA 90631 • 562/690-2386 www.lahabraschools.org



Debbve Viveros Coordinator

Readiness on the Road

Early Learning is supporting the La Habra Little Learners by bringing Readiness on the

Road to the community of La Habra. For the month of February, join our team at Brillo Park

for music and movement. community resources, and family fun.

We had a great turn out for our informational meeting for Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and Kindergarten registration for the 2023-2024 school year. To enter TK, children must be 4 years of age on or before August 31, 2023. To enter Kindergarten, children must be 5 years of age on or

before September 1, 2023. To register your child for the 2023-2024 school year, please visit the La Habra School website at www.lahabraschools.org.



La Habra City School District parents are eager to hear information about our District and enroll their children.

Fun Things and Places—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 La Habra in the subject line.

Entries must be received by March 30, 2023

From the correct entries one name will be drawn to win a \$20 gift card to Barnes & Noble!

CARNIVAL	CAMP
HOME	SEASHORE
SCHOOL	FARM
PARK	Z00
SLIDES	HIKE
SWINGS	BIKE RIDE
ROAD TRIP	REUNION
PARTY	CRUISE
MOVIE	SKATING
POOL	VIDEOS
FOREST	

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Arbolita (TK—6) Visual & Performing Arts Academy

1001 E. Brookdale Ave., La Habra, CA 90631 • 562/690-2352 • www.lahabraschools.org/arbolita



Jennifer McCully Rodriguez Principal

A Class Act at Arbolita!

"Hakuna Matata"- we have no worries at Arbolita Visual and Performing Arts Academy as we sing our way into the New Year with rehearsals for our Disney Musical

in Schools Production of the "Lion King"! Our Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth graders had the opportunity to audition for this

fabulous production! These students are working hard in staging, blocking, dancing, and singing to create a magical experience. In addition to our musical, Arbolita was accepted into the Class Act program! We will be working with the Pacific Symphony as we explore "Musical Conversations" with the music of Johann Sebastian Bach this year! Additionally, the winter holidays brought joyous performances to our outdoor amphitheater. All grades performed songs for our families dressed in

pajamas, red and green, reindeer outfits, and more! Our Fourth and Fifth graders participated in the Walk Thru California and the Walk Thru the American Revolution presentations. Arbolita students are truly immersing themselves in the visual and performing arts!



Our Fifth Graders all dressed up for their Walk Thru the American Revolution Presentation!

El Cerrito (TK-6) Code to the Future (Computer Science)

1051 N. Hillside, La Habra, CA 90631 • 562/690-2340 • www.lahabraschools.org/elcerrito



Deanna Putnam Principal

Putting Scotties' Wellness at the Forefront

El Cerrito is proud to introduce to you our School Counselor, Ms. Elaine Young. As a full time member of the El Cerrito team, Ms. Young has been able to offer so many new programs to our TK through 6th grade students. Students utilize her Calm Space on campus daily for many different programs throughout the week. All students have access to Lunch Bunch on Tuesdays and

Thursdays where they play board games and have other activities to choose from. This time is used to develop social skills and offer a fun place for students to gather and make new friends. She also offers Minecraft Club for students to engage in challenges and discuss their work in small groups. Ms. Young provides one-on-one counseling and small group sessions to develop social emotional and social skills. El Cerrito students have really come to know and count on Ms. Young as a staff member they can rely on.

Ms. Young collaborates with team members to provide students with opportunities to promote our school-wide PBIS focus. She has encouraged kindness, acceptance and inclusion among students with activities such as Start with Hello week and the Great Kindness Challenge week. She works closely with our 6th Grade P.A.W. Council Leadership Team to organize these events and create a school climate that promotes being kind to everyone, acceptance and inclusion of all students.

We are so excited to welcome her to our Scottie team!



Imperial (6—8) International Baccalaureate & Visual Performing Arts

1450 S. Schoolwood Dr., La Habra, CA 90631 • 562/690-2344 • www.lahabraschools.org/imperial



Erik Bagger Principal

Continuing to Dream Big and Shine Bright in 2023

The Imperial Knights afterschool sports program is alive and thriving. To be a student athlete at Imperial Middle School means you are willing to be committed, work harder, and be leaders on and off the field, court, and classroom. IMS student athletes not only keep their grades up but also strive to be the best in what they do.

To open the school year, over 80 students tried out for the first season of Co-ed Volleyball and Flag Football. Our Flag Football teams finished strong at over .500 on the season and 7th & 8th grade Volleyball finished 6-4 while maintaining an average 3.5 GPA all season. As we entered the new year, more than 100 students tried out for season 2: Boys basketball and Girls soccer. Season 2 kicked off February 6th where the Imperial Knights traveled to Buena Park to face Beatty Middle School. Our student athletes will be shined bright in their new uniforms as they dream big for an exciting and winning season. The Knights will close out the season at home on February 23rd, as they face their hometown rival Washington Middle School.



Ladera Palma (TK-6) Dual Immersion Academy

2151 E. Brookdale Ave., La Habra, CA 90631 • 562/690-2348 • www.lahabraschools.org/laderapalma



Dr. Rosa Murillo Principal

A Vision Come To Life

When we envisioned our school garden, we dreamed of a space that extended student learning outside of the classroom. Our classrooms adopt different areas of the garden and visit regularly. Working with our garden club, our students and teachers

explore not only botanical topics, but also stewardship and responsible gardening. Additionally, we see the opportunity to involve our families and community as partners in our learning. As we continue to build our garden, we have now scheduled monthly family gatherings at our garden. For our January 2023 gathering, our garden club, made up of wonderful parent volunteers and staff members, decided to begin the year by planting and exploring the garden together. It is beautiful to see our dream for a thriving school garden come to fruition!



Las Lomas (TK-6) Entrepreneur Exploration & Music/Art

301 Las Lomas Dr., La Habra, CA 90631 • 562/690-2353 • www.lahabraschools.org/laslomas



Pam Cunningham Principal

Students are Shining Bright in our New EPIC Program

Our new before/after school EPIC program is in full swing for our Las Lomas students. We are so excited to be able to offer our students nine different programs that are geared toward intervention and enrichment. The HIVE is offered before/after school where students

are provided homework help so that they are able to finish or get help on their assignments. Reading Intervention helps students improve their reading skills and is offered after school through our Reading Club. VAPA Club, Disney Musical in Schools, Entrepreneur Club, Lego Club, IDEA Club and Basketball are also offered to provide a variety of enrichment opportunities our students are not able to experience outside of their school day. Students will also be offered a chance to attend four fun-filled Saturday field trips before the end of the school year. Students are thoroughly enjoying the opportunity to learn something new.



IDEA Club making kindness rocks for Kindness Week.

Las Positas (TK-5) International Baccalaureate

1400 S. Schoolwood Dr., La Habra, CA 90631 • 562/690-2356 • www.lahabraschools.org/laspositas



Dr. Suena Chang Principal

Celebrating Our Successful English Learners

One of my favorite events at Las Positas is celebrating our students. On January 12th, we celebrated 19 students who successfully met the requirements for the English Learner reclassification. When students enter the school system and are identified as English Learners (ELs), they receive

additional language support so that they can build their English proficiency. Students receive integrated and designated instruction. Reclassification takes place based on ELPAC results, teacher evaluation, parent consultation, and meeting grade level goals on district multiple measures. These students met all of the criteria and are so proud of their successes! Congratulations!

Go Lions!



Sierra Vista (TK—6) College Pathways-No Excuses & Music/Art Exploration

1800 E. Whittier Ave., La Habra, CA 90631 • 562/690-2359 • www.lahabraschools.org/sierravista



Anna Rosales Principal

Goal Setting in the New Year

As a No Excuses University School, we are committed to our academic success. This cannot be achieved without setting goals. With January officially midway through our school year, students are preparing to take the midyear assessment in the i-ready Diagnostic. Our staff believes that

our students' data belongs to THEM, not us the educators. Our students need to take ownership of their learning and their scores. Therefore, before embarking on the assessment, teachers and students are spending time to reflect on their progress since the fall assessment. Our students are setting realistic goals for the upcoming winter diagnostic. This analysis is individualized and student involved so that they can take ownership for their own progress and learning. Students take pride in their achievements and know that creating short term goals and focusing on an action plan on how to accomplish them will bring about their overall success. As our students



experience academic success, they will be able to shine bright in whatever they set out to do in their future!

Walnut (TK-6) STEAM Academy/AVID

625 N. Walnut St., La Habra, CA 90631 • 562/690-2369 • www.lahabraschools.org/walnut



Dr. Alma Noche Principal

Winter STEAM Showcase

Walnut STEAM Academy's Winter STEAM Showcase was held on Friday, January 20. The Showcase was the culmination of a unit of study which blended multiple content areas and academic standards. Each grade level determine which standards would provide the foundation for deeper understanding. All grade levels used the Science and Engineering standards to

produce the projects that were proudly displayed during the Showcase. As visitors made their way around campus, they were greeted by students who were eager to share what they had learned. Students displayed confidence as they spoke about their project using the academic language that they learned. Leading up to the showcase, students learned their content standards but also how to work as a team and use each other's strengths to be successful.

We look forward to opening our campus again for our Open House event on March 16, 2023.



Students proudly explain their work to family and friends.

Washington (7-8) Project Lead the Way/Engineering/Music

716 E. La Habra Blvd., La Habra, CA 90631 • 562/960-2374 • www.lahabraschools.org/washington



Greg White Principal

Engaging Our Community this Spring!

Washington Middle school is working hard to engage our families and students to build a stronger community together. Our festivals are having great success this year starting with our well-received Fall Festival in October. Next up, our Third Annual Washington Film Festival—an amazing night that highlights our talented, student filmmakers. Our fundraiser, Painting for Patients, benefitting Ronald McDonald

House continues this year. This is a virtual art auction of student art that engages our school community in our charity efforts. Also, we partner with the Orange County Food Bank to bring Second Harvest food distribution to our campus. Families, students, and staff serve our community through this wonderful program. Finally, our regular committees continue in support of our school by engaging families through School Site Council, English Learner Advisory Council, PTSA, and more. Together with families, students, and staff, we continue to foster a strong and vibrant Washington community.



Students and staff members building our community together with a fun day!



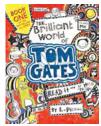


Daniel's Review

Daniel H.

Very Funny Book!

Title: The Brilliant World of Tom Gates Author: Liz Pichon The Brilliant World of Tom Gates is about a boy named Tom. Tom and his best friend Derek are in a band called Dog Zombies



and they both want to go to a Dude3 concert but Tom has many silly problems to deal with. Read this book to see what happens and to laugh out loud! This book is very funny and has really funny pictures. I loved this book and can't wait to read the other books in this series!

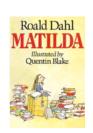
Daniel is in third grade and he likes to spend time with his family playing board games, reading, and playing sports like tennis, basketball, and bowling.

David's Review



Title: Matilda Author: Roald Dahl Matilda is a book about an intelligent girl whose parents neglect her. When she starts going to school, she meets a nice and caring teacher, Miss Honey. Matilda

Smart and Funny



later discovers that she has a special talent. What is her special talent? You should read the book not just to find out but also if you want to laugh! The things that Matilda does throughout the book were funny and the author's writing is hilarious. This is one of my favorite books and I'm sure it will be yours too!

David is in fifth grade and he loves to read and play piano. He likes math and activities such as tennis, basketball, and bowling.

Taegyoung's Book Review



Taegyoung K.

Make-Believe World

Title: Where the Sidewalk Ends

Author: Shel Silverstein I'll give you a moment to think about it. Where else will you find a boy who ate the world, or a world with flying shoes? Well of course not here, but it exists in Shel Silverstein's



"Where the Sidewalk Ends". A book full to the brim with poems. Don't get me wrong. They're not just a handful of boring words, they have a meaning of their own. Some teach you lessons, some are intriguing, and others are there for the good old laugh out loud. But whichever one you read; they all have something to enjoy. The illustrations on some of them are spot on, showing the reader what this poem has in store for them. There are no boundaries of imagination in these poems, the only way is up. So, if you're looking for the next sister auction or some diamond gardens, look no further than this book.

Taegyoung K. is a 7th grader. She loves reading books and writing her own stories. Also, she likes to draw and play video games.

Yoona's Review



The Math Girl

Title: The Miscalculations of Lightning Girl Author: Stacy Mcanulty The main character's name is Lucy. Lucy was struck by lightning. She loves math, and



Yoona C.

is actually a genius with math! Lucy most of all loves pi. If she doesn't sit, stand 3 times pi

appears and keeps going in her head. Lucy is homeschooled and lives with her Grandmother. She is ready to go to college, but her grandmother insists and forces her to go to middle school for at least 1 year. Her grandmother says to make 1 friend, join one activity, and read one book. Later on, the school has a project where you have to help places, or people in need. Lucy and her friends plan to help a dog shelter. She later finds a dog named Cutie Pi and instantly falls in love. Lucy's Grandmother soon finds a school that is good for her intelligence, but she's not sure if she wants to go...Does Lucy decide to leave the school and friends? I like this book because there are a lot of changes in this book. which makes it more interesting.

Yoona is a 4th grader. She likes to read books and create stories. She also enjoys playing soccer.

Kailani's Review



Kailani T.

Hard work and Dedication

"I've Got This!" is book 1 of 8 in the Perfect Balance Gymnastics Series by Melissa Torres. The story is about Trista Thompson, a young tumbler who has just moved to Utah and wants to join a



competitive gymnastics team. Since she is

great at tumbling, she believes she can quickly and easily learn all gymnastics skills. Can she learn gymnastics skills quickly? What does it take for Trista to be part of the team? Will she be good enough to join the team?

I like all of the books in the *Perfect Balance* Gymnastics Series, especially this one. As a competitive gymnast, reading this book at the start of my new gymnastics season encourages me to try new skills and work harder to improve my existing skills. I give this book 5 out of 5 stars and would highly recommend it to anyone who loves gymnastics or wants to explore the world of gymnasts.

Kailani is a 5th grader who loves to read. When not reading, Kailani likes to play with her brother, jump on the trampoline, listen to music, and ride horses.

Jenna's Review



Jenna C.

Have it all!

Title: Almanac 2021 Which language has the most first language speakers? You might want to hit up for an almanac. What's an almanac? It's basically a book that speaks facts. Maybe you



don't like that type of person, but you might like that type of book. Maybe you can also learn more things like, do you want to know where Alexander the Great was buried? How future homes may be built? Studying rocks? It has it all. From wanting to study stars to knowing about the coolest cats, you can imagine. It's as real as red being red and green being green but, as versatile as the library books.

Jenna is a 6th grader. She enjoys playing soccer and drawing. She likes to read fiction novels. Someday she wants to publish a book.

Tegan's Book Review



Tegan

Mysterious Saves

The In-Between, a captivating fiction written by Rebecca Ansari, revolves around the complicated life of Cooper, a teenage boy living in a poor household, with the



absence of a father. As a strange new neighbor; a young girl named "Elena" moves in alone, Cooper and his younger sister Jess start to investigate the secrets she hides.

While Cooper and Jess realize that Elena has been the ignored figure that saved one juvenile's life each mass incident, they fail to quickly recognize that Elena herself has to die painfully and wake up only to repeat the process. Cooper and Jess introduce themselves into the dark world where the mysterious girl is trapped in between life and death, and make it their mission to save Elena. Readers are taught the importance of remembering the forgotten and what it means to be seen. All in all, I rate this novel 5/5.

Tegan Y. is a fifth grader who enjoys art, biking, writing, and reading.

Sourish's Review



Sourish M.

The Hidden Leader Within

Have you met someone you haven't seen in a while, especially one close to you? Well this book, The Traveler, talks about the main character Aramar Thorne who is shocked by the sudden



emergence of his father Captain Greydon Thorne. Greydon takes Aramar on a journey with him but after several months, the ship is attacked by the raiders known as the Hidden. It left Aramar and Second Mate Makasa Flitwill all alone to lead themselves back home. The many questions that Aramar had was about the special compass that his father had given to him right before the shipwreck. Little did he know that the compass was the key to something greater than him. The Traveler offers a magnificent roller coaster ride in emotions and is overall a really great book. It displays the message of using leadership skills and knowledge when the time comes. You have to Endure...

Sourish M. is a seventh grader who is enthusiastic to learn more and experience new things. He likes Science and Reading, plays soccer, basketball, guitar, and has fun with friends and family. Sourish loves to spend long hours coding and expanding his experiences by traveling with his family.

Orange County Department of Education



Dr. Al MijaresSuperintendent

On a crisp December morning, the City of Westminster and the Orange County Department of Education celebrated the opening of a new park honoring the historic case of Mendez v. Westminster, which put an end to forced segregation in California's public schools while laying the foundation for the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark Brown v. Board decision.

City officials, local dignitaries, students and community members turned out in force for Mendez Tribute Monument Park's dedication ceremony, marking the completion of a five-year collaborative effort. But a few days before its official opening, I had an opportunity to preview the park with Sylvia Mendez, a civil rights icon whose story is central to the case.

Nearly 80 years earlier, in 1943, Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez sought to enroll Sylvia and her two brothers, Geronimo and Gonzalo, Jr., at 17th Street School, known then as "the white school." Despite being American citizens who spoke English — the family lived and worked on a Westminster farm — they were turned away and directed instead to Hoover Elementary, a campus designated for Mexican American children.

Sylvia Mendez was just 8 years old at the time. She would later describe Hoover as "a terrible little shack" with dirt for a playground.

The Mendez family ultimately hired an attorney and teamed up with four other Orange County families who had similarly been denied access to their neighborhood schools. Their case, Mendez, et al v. Westminster et al, argued that 5,000 children throughout the county were unjustly harmed by unconstitutional segregation policies.

In 1946, U.S. District Court Judge Paul J. McCormick ruled in favor of the five families, and his decision was later upheld by the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. The case ended on April 14, 1947 — one day before Jackie Robinson broke baseball's color barrier with the Brooklyn Dodgers. Seven years later, the Supreme Court declared segregated schools unconstitutional in its sweeping Brown v. Board decision.

Gonzalo Mendez died in 1964 at age 51, and his wife Felicitas passed in 1998 — but not before urging her daughter to share the family's story far and wide.

On Monday, Nov. 28, bronze statues of Gonzalo and Felicitas were unveiled for the first time in the new quarter-acre park, which also features a large textbook monument and statues of two students, symbolizing the children impacted by the court's decision. Surrounding these displays are drought-resistant plants, a dry creek bed and interactive stations with content from OCDE's staff of professional educators, who also developed lesson plans and activities for teachers.

As the towering likenesses of her parents were revealed, Sylvia Mendez and her siblings stood front and center. Other invited guests took photos and applauded.

"I'm just so happy," Sylvia said. "I know my mother and family are looking at us from heaven, and they are so happy. Thank you for honoring them."

In this season of gratitude, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Mendezes, along with the Estrada, Guzman, Palomino and Ramirez families, all of whom fought for access and equality on behalf of generations of students they would never meet. As Felicitas Mendez said, they were taking action not just for their own children, but para todos los niños — for all children.

The Mendez case is worth celebrating because it broke new ground not just for Orange County but for our entire nation, broadening and strengthening the principles on which this country was founded.

Now and forever, Mendez Tribute Monument Park will serve as a space to gather behind shared values, to reflect on those principles, to revisit a watershed moment in our history and to learn more about the everyday Americans who made it possible.

For more information on Mendez Tribute Monument Park, along with lesson plans and activities, visit www.mendezpark.org.