

# School News

*Education + Communication = A Better Nation*

**Covering the Los Alamitos Unified School District**



Volume 20, Issue 100

April 2023

## **Congratulations Mrs. Cheryl Smith Los Alamitos USD Teacher of the Year!**



(Please see page 3)



## Combating Springtime Allergies and Asthma

By: Malaika Graves, M.D., pediatrician, MemorialCare Medical Group Long Beach (Los Altos)

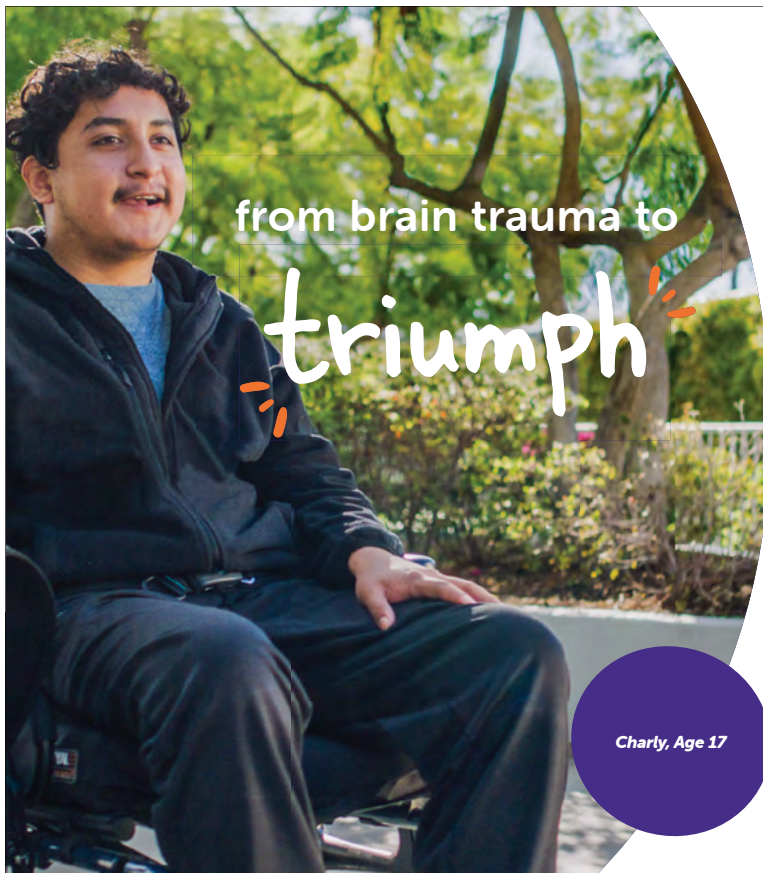
The wet winter Southern California has seen means that grass, trees, and flowers will start blooming perhaps sooner than expected – however so will allergy season. In addition, windy conditions in the springtime can cause pollen and other allergens to stir throughout the air and irritate the lungs of children across the region.

Spring allergies and asthma can be challenging for kids, but there are several ways you can safeguard them.

- Keep windows and doors closed. Close your home's windows and doors during high pollen days to prevent allergens from entering your home. You can also use an air purifier with a HEPA filter to keep the indoor air clean as well.
- Encourage regular hand washing. Show your child how washing their hands regularly helps remove allergens they have encountered.

- Keep your home clean. Vacuum, dust, and clean your home regularly to remove any allergens that may have accumulated.
- Changing children's clothing after playing outside and bathing at night can also ensure your child doesn't sleep with pollen on them. Pets may carry pollen on them too, so keep pets that play outside out of your child's bedroom.
- If your child has received prescription medications for their allergies, make sure they are taking them regularly to help combat the severity of their allergies.

If your child's symptoms persist or worsen, seek medical advice from your child's pediatrician. Remember, prevention is key when it comes to allergies and asthma. By taking the necessary precautions and following the tips mentioned above, you can help keep your kids less effected by allergies during the spring season.



Charly, Age 17



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## Celebrating our Los Alamitos Unified Teacher of the Year



**Dr. Andrew Pulver**  
Superintendent

I am thrilled to have the opportunity to highlight our Los Alamitos Unified Teacher of the Year, Mrs. Cheryl Smith, a special education teacher at McGaugh Elementary School. Mrs. Smith is an extraordinary member of our Los Alamitos USD family who is an exceptional role model, advocate for all students, and embodies our district motto “Igniting Unlimited Possibilities.”

Smith started her career in Los Alamitos in 2000 and has been teaching in the district for the past 23 years. She began as a Weaver Whale, where she taught for 11 years, and then transferred to McGaugh, her home for the last 12 years. Whether she is teaching an autism-specific class, a mild-moderate Special Day class, or a collaborative class, with both general education and special education students, Smith is a warrior and champion for every student, both inside and outside of the classroom. She works hard not only because she knows students, families, and colleagues depend on her, but because she is invested in leaving a legacy of servant leadership and student advocacy within the District. Her over two decades in public education serve as a foundation for this legacy that has changed so many lives and opened so many doors.

Smith has the same dreams for her students that she has for her own children, and she understands the multifaceted challenges all students can experience. She believes building a relationship with each student is essential to understanding them and meeting them where they are, so they are able to grow and develop. Providing a safe place for students to be accepted and encouraged, the trust she builds is priceless and is the true catalyst for change.

A lifelong learner, she never passes on the opportunity to be a student herself. Her love of learning continually propels her on a quest to find another tool or strategy that she can bring back to her classroom to reach every student. As a founding teacher of our District’s Special Education Advisory Team, she spends time, after school hours, collaborating with and leading teachers across all campuses, analyzing data, digesting research, and employing new ways to create student access and teacher well-being through systems change. She is a constant in our District work concerning equitable and accessible instruction for all students. She is filled with an internal hope that every student can be reached and it’s infectious.

Cheryl Smith is an inspiring, positive, dedicated, and committed teacher. She truly embodies what it means to be our Los Alamitos Unified Teacher of the Year.

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Netragrednik

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Covering the  
**LOS ALAMITOS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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**ADVERTISING SALES:** 562/493-3193

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**GRAPHIC DESIGNER/PRODUCTION:**

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**SOCIAL MEDIA:** Nancy Lueder

**Netragrednik** by Neta Madison



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P.O. Box 728, Seal Beach, CA 90740

562/493-3193

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Dr. Pulver begins this issue with his message on page 3 recognizing Cheryl Smith, Special Education Teacher at McGaugh Elementary, as the Los Alamitos Unified School District Teacher of the Year.

As the end of this school year is in sight there are still amazing things happening in the classrooms. In this issue you will read articles about Garden Parties, Read on the Green, Global School Day, Husky Buddies, Reading Challenge, Arts Festival, Ability Awareness and much more... Our next issue is May 31.



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**Cassandra Sargent**  
Branch Manager

The branch closed for tenant enhancements as of February 27th, 2023. A book drop is available outside the branch for returns.

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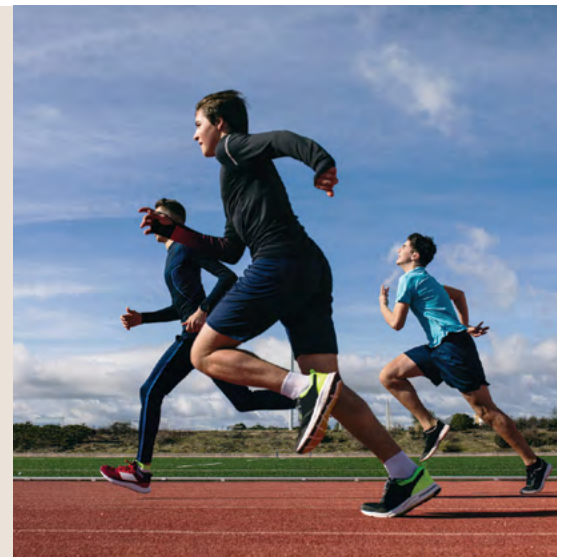
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## Why Adopt a Senior Dog

*By Murlyn E. Burkes, Cat Committee Liaison*

We all love puppies! They're super cute and full of energy and they just want to explore the world around them. It's a lot of work to raise a puppy.

When you adopt a senior dog, you have the privilege of selecting the fully-formed personality that should fit into your lifestyle. Senior dogs have already developed into who they are. They love to be with you but at the same time, they can entertain themselves. Senior dogs will chew bones or find a cozy spot for a snooze.

Senior dogs can easily adjust to your way of doing things. Older dogs can still run, jump and play barring any health issues. Senior dogs may have a past, but they don't let that get to them. They forgive, forget and live in the present. Best part of it all, senior dogs sleep when you sleep. Most of all, when you adopt a senior dog, you save a life! You give them love and comfort in their later years.



Let us introduce you to Katniss (9 years old) and Peeta (4 years old). They are a bonded pair and where one goes, the other one follows.

# Summertime Fun in Los Alamitos!



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## Parent To Parent



Jodie Lynn

### A Helicopter Parent

**Q.** I have been a helicopter parent for so long that my children, ages seven and nine, are extremely apprehensive of taking any risks in various activities or doing anything where they may get even slightly hurt or disappointed. What have I done and how do I correct it?

**A.** There have been overbearing and overprotective parents for years; don't beat yourself up too badly. It's easy for parents to go overboard when it comes to their kids. However, this can continue into college years and beyond, but it doesn't have to. Your parenting style and the way you view your children will need to change. You'll need to allow them to get used to the idea that they can actually try things on their own. Go ahead and sign them up for things that they are truly interested in and will most likely do well at. A few successes will build their self-confidence and they will perhaps want to do more things that are new and different. It's the mistakes and bumps in life that we all learn from that make us stronger individuals, better able to handle future situations. We have to be allowed to fail.

Jodie Lynn is an award winning, internationally syndicated family/health and education columnist and best selling author. [www.ParentToParent.com](http://www.ParentToParent.com)

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# Hopkinson *Elementary*

12582 Kensington Rd., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4500 • [hopkinson.losal.org](http://hopkinson.losal.org)



**Jason Farvour**  
*Principal*

## Husky Buddies

Each year, Hopkinson partners older students with younger students for our peer mentoring program, Husky Buddies. These classroom buddy partnerships allow our older students the chance to support younger children through targeted learning opportunities as well as social connections across our campus. With our site theme this year being We Are All Huskies, our focus on inclusion and connectedness to our Hopkinson community is further supported in this peer-to-peer work. Throughout the year, our big buddies can be seen supporting our younger learners in reading, writing, mathematics, CGI, STEAM and art. These partnerships not only help develop connectedness across our school, but also allow the older students to further develop their sense of responsibility and mentorship, while fostering increased self-efficacy with our younger learners. Being a Husky Buddy builds a sense of pride in student mentors while supporting our sense of school community and belonging amongst all kids at Hopkinson.



**Our Buddies at work, reading in the classroom and reading during Read Across America day out on our field.**







**Laura Trotter**  
Interim Principal

### Start With Hello/Kindness Week

During the week of March 13 to 17 all of our Leos celebrated “Start with Hello/Kindness Week.” The Start with Hello program is an activity that is a part of the Sandy Hook Promise Organization. It was started in 2012 to honor the lives of those who were lost at Sandy Hook Elementary. Start With Hello empowers our students to recognize loneliness and social isolation in their peers by offering effective strategies to reach out and help, and in ways with which we can grow an empathetic and inclusive community.

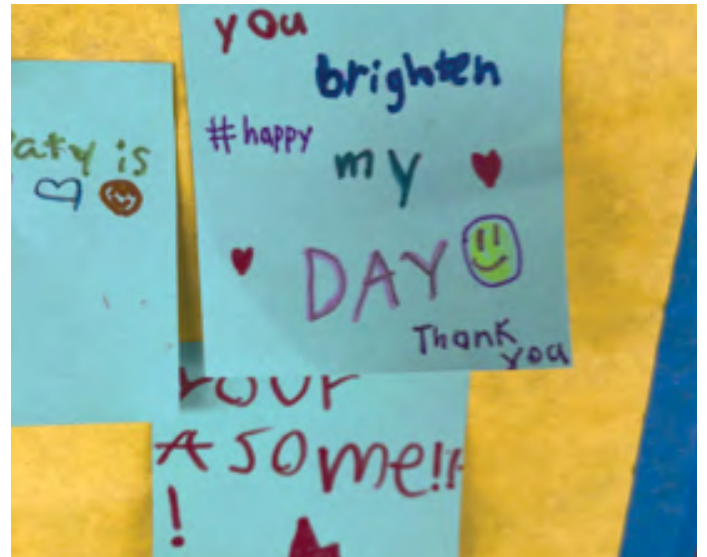


**Start With Hello mural on end of the classroom building that kids can see when playing on playground.**

We are always wanting our Leos to look for ways to show up for each other and be a helpful friend, but we really emphasize it during this special week. Throughout the event our teachers read books, showed videos, had discussions, and did other activities that helped educate our Leos on kindness, care, empathy, and compassion.

Every day of this special week was centered on a particular theme, such as “Be a Buddy” Day. This was where the big and little buddy classes partnered in

activities together, as well as shared “Give & Take” post-it notes where the students wrote a positive message to place on their grade-level’s sign. The next day all of the students in that grade level went back to the poster and took a post-it note that they connected with.



**Student Post-it Note Example**

The week also involved our leadership service groups Peacemakers and the student council. The students who are involved in these groups came to school early each day to write kindness messages in chalk on the long walkway that leads all the way from our Kinder classes to the fifth-grade classrooms. They also created and hung posters around the school that contained messages of positivity, kindness, and encouragement to help reach out to those who are alone.



**2nd Grade Poster with Encouraging/Positive Post-it Notes**

# Los Alamitos *Elementary*

10862 Bloomfield St., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4700 • [lae.losal.org](http://lae.losal.org)



**Gary Willems**  
*Principal*

## Ready Challenge

LAE held its annual Reading Challenge where all our TIGERS were challenged to read as much as possible to raise funds. This year's theme was Harry Potter. We had over 250 students completely fill their B.I.N.G.O. reading boards, an all-time record at LAE. Reading was focused on at school and at home and our T.E.A.M. LAE showed students that the more they can read, the more

successful they will be in life. While the main focus was highlighting the importance of reading, we also raised over \$25,000 that will directly benefit all of our TIGERS. The top 5 classes all got reading bundles full of books and money for the teachers to use during our book fair to buy new books for their classroom. This event was such a success we had a special assembly where actors portrayed Harry Potter characters bringing the theme to life. We also had a silly sting battle. Thank you to T.E.A.M. LAE, we truly proved that Together We Achieve More.



# Los Alamitos *High School*

3591 W. Cerritos Ave., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4780 • [lahs.losal.org](http://lahs.losal.org)



**Christiana Kraus**  
*Principal*

## Open House and Showcase

The Spring 2023 events at Los Alamitos High School began on Wednesday, March 15 with our annual Open House and Showcase. The activity kicked off with a meeting for the incoming ninth-grade students, with visitors from both the community and the Los Alamitos Unified's Oak and McAuliffe Middle Schools. The LAHS Performing Arts Center was packed to overflowing with parents and students who were eager to learn about the many programs and opportunities afforded to them as Griffins.

Ms. Christiana Kraus, our principal, began with a presentation about the different LAHS programs, and our support of the "Four A's" of Academics, Athletics, Arts, and Activities. She also talked about key dates and information sessions and gave details about the Open House program. The counseling team continued the presentation to discuss the course selection and registration process, as well as the various pathways for students who are interested in college-prep and honors courses. The special education

team also continued the presentation after closing to inform parents about our special education programs and student supports.

The Open House event began at 6 p.m. with our eighth-grade students and families visiting around the campus. Our current Griffin families were also able to visit their teachers and classrooms. LAHS clubs and organizations and our ASB students also lined the main entryway to greet the families as they entered and inform them of some of the amazing activities our school has to offer.

As the families toured the campus they had a great opportunity to experience our arts, music, and dance programs, and to see how the students are connecting through our Career Technical Education pathways to learn about computer science, biology-medical, engineering, theater tech, video production, and sports medicine.

The evening concluded at 7:30 p.m. The event was a great success due to the strong support of our LAUSD stakeholders, families, students, and the faculty and staff members of Los Alamitos High School.



# McAuliffe *Middle School*

4112 W. Cerritos Ave., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 714/816-3320 • [mcauliffe.losal.org](http://mcauliffe.losal.org)



**Dr. Ryan  
Weiss-Wright**  
*Principal*

## McAuliffe Spring Arts Festival

This Spring at McAuliffe we are hosting our 1st Annual McAuliffe Arts Festival. This unique event will combine performances from all Visual and Performing Arts Departments, Arts Education opportunities for all students

and families, and the 5th Annual McAuliffe Film Festival. Happening on May 17th, this event will bring the entire McAuliffe community together to celebrate art! We are very proud of the students at McAuliffe for constantly finding ways to connect to school through our various programs and look forward to showcasing this work for the community!



# McGaugh *Elementary*

1698 Bolsa Ave., Seal Beach, CA 90740 • 562/799-4560 • [mcgaugh.losal.org](http://mcgaugh.losal.org)



**Wendy Wood**  
*Principal*

## Teacher of the Year

It gives me great pleasure to announce that Mrs. Cheryl Smith, our McGaugh special education teacher, has been selected as the 2023 Los Alamitos Unified School District Teacher of the Year!

Mrs. Smith is an exceptional role model and a true advocate for all children. She believes that building a relationship with each student is essential to understanding and meeting them where they are so that they can grow and develop. Always providing a safe place for her students to be accepted and encouraged, Cheryl is constantly utilizing

signature practices to ensure that every child is valued.

Cheryl is curriculum-driven, and exposes her students to a curricula that is rich in all of the district's signature practices. She believes that holding high expectations for each student yields results. She is professional in her attitude and demeanor, supportive of all teachers, respectful in her dealings with parents, and always available to the students of McGaugh. She is inspiring, positive, dedicated, committed, and well beyond deserving of this honor.

Please join me in congratulating Cheryl on this prestigious recognition. She is a positive light in our district, and we couldn't be prouder to name her as our Los Alamitos Unified School District's 2023 Teacher of the Year!



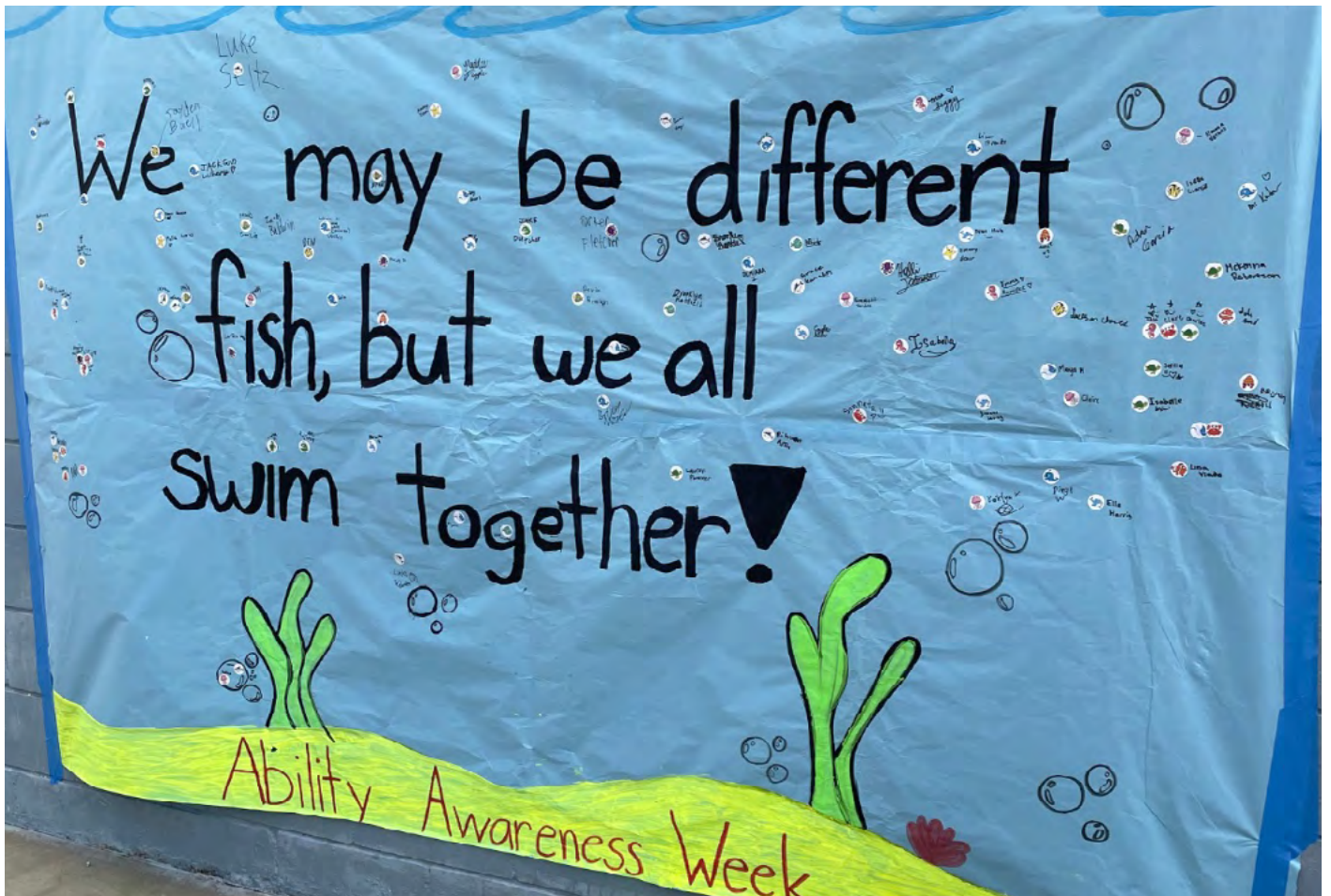


**Evelyn Garcia**  
Principal

### Ability Awareness Week

We were so excited to celebrate Ability Awareness Week at Oak! This week recognizes and celebrates that our campus includes many ability levels and neurotypes. We also use this as an opportunity to educate our school community about the many disabilities that

people experience in our world. Did you know, according to the National Bullying Prevention Center, children with disabilities were two to three times more likely to be bullied than their nondisabled peers? Ability Awareness Week promotes acceptance of all people and abilities to help make Oak a more inclusive place for all. The activities included World Down Syndrome Awareness Day, learning about the Special Olympics, and that not all disabilities are visible. We are excited to welcome ALL students at Oak. Each Lion comes to us with unique and diverse experiences that contribute to our PRIDE.





**Amy Coltey**  
*Principal*

## Garden Parties at Rossmoor

Recently, the fourth-grade classes at Rossmoor spent some time out in our garden. They were able to participate in a variety of learning activities, and also get their hands dirty!

The students first got to participate in a measurement practice with seed tape. They also planted seeds for their California native garden, pruned and harvested our citrus trees, and did a little weeding. They even enjoyed some fresh lemonade from our garden's lemons with the help of parent volunteer Brian Haber and our gardening volunteers Donna and Ila.



Our fourth-graders had such an amazing experience, and all of the classes have been invited back to meet with our master gardeners and volunteers. Working in the garden involves academics on many levels, including math and measuring, social studies and natural habitats, and science and ecosystems, just to name a few!

In between our recent rainstorms, some of the first-grade students have been examining different types of plants and how they grow. They have also learned that food deserts are places where people cannot find fresh food, and so at the end of their science unit they created a class design for an urban garden to grow fresh food in the city. Our class also went out to the garden this week to plant their own version of a "pizza garden." With the help of our Master Gardener's Mrs. Donna and Mrs. Ila, each of the students got to plant a "slice" of their pizza using seedlings from basil, pepper, oregano, parsley, onion, and tomato plants.

The children loved getting their hands dirty as they aerated the soil, dug a hole, and lightly sprinkled the soil back onto their plants. They learned about the importance of watering the plants at the stem and roots, and even got to taste-test different types of lettuce from the upper-grade garden. With all of this rain now, our first-graders are hopeful that their pizza garden will be flourishing in the next couple of weeks!



Our kindergarten students have also been planting seeds for the future. In between the rain, they went out to the beautiful beds and planted pumpkin seeds. Just like the first-grade students, they loved to get their hands dirty by each digging a hole and dropping their seeds in! They will have to wait until next fall to see their harvest, but they will be so excited as first-graders when the full bed of pumpkins bloom in time for Halloween. The picture with the kindergarten class in a line shows them blowing good luck kisses to the seeds!

Thank you for the dedication of our gardeners Donna, Ila, and Brian. We are so grateful for our volunteers who bring their passion to our Rossmoor Knights. And thank you also to Mr. Vierra and Ms. Ly, our teacher-garden coordinators.



# Weaver *Elementary*

11872 Wembley Rd., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4580 • [weaver.local.org](http://weaver.local.org)



**Dr. Todd Schmidt**  
*Principal*

## Global School Play Day

At Weaver, it is important that we find as many ways to include our community in the many exciting events that take place on our campus. In the last few months, we have brought back two big events: Global School Play Day and Read On The Green. Both geared towards family engagement, both events allowed our students and their parents the chance to focus on two very important things...unstructured play and the joy of

reading. For Global School Play Day, families brought lunch, sporting equipment, board games, and other activities to spend the afternoon just having fun! With Read On The Green, parents, teachers, and other community members enjoyed the beautiful weather and shared favorite stories and enjoyed reading just for the sake of reading. Highlighting that #WeAreWeaver spirit, they were wonderful days full of laughter, camaraderie, and joy!

