

# School News

*Education + Communication = A Better Nation*

**Covering the Saddleback Valley Unified School District**



Volume 6, Issue 21

April 2023

## SVUSD Teamwork!



**A concerted effort of administrators, teachers, and First Student work together to transport students home from camp during winter storms.**



# SPRING EVENTS

**APRIL  
15**

## FREE MULCH & COMPOST PICK-UP

**8:30 – 11:30 AM**

Bring your shovel and your own container and SMWD will provide the FREE material. Many thanks to OC Waste and Recycling's Capistrano Greenery for making this event possible!

**REGISTRATION REQUIRED**

## EARTH DAY CREEK CLEAN UP

**9 AM – 12 PM**

Volunteer to help clean up the Water Works bike trail, the sidewalk along Antonio Parkway, and the trickling Trabuco Creek near Oso Parkway.

**REGISTRATION REQUIRED**

**APRIL  
29**



## GARDEN TOUR & EXPO

**8:30 – 10:30 AM** Garden Design Expo

**11 AM – 1 PM** Self-guided Driving Tour

Chat with plant experts and take home some sweet garden giveaways! Learn about sustainable landscape design and tour the SMWD WaterWorks demonstration garden. Get a map and head out on a self-guided home garden tour!

**REGISTRATION REQUIRED**

**MAY  
06**



## WATER FESTIVAL 2023

**10 AM – 1 PM**

Fun For The Whole Family! Tour the warehouse and chat with our team about all things water. Walk through a five-and-half-foot tall water pipeline! Stroll through the WaterWorks Garden and be inspired by beautiful California friendly plants. Talk with garden professionals, water experts, and dozens of exhibitors. Enjoy children's activities - face painting, reptiles, pipe building races & more!



**Santa Margarita  
Water District**

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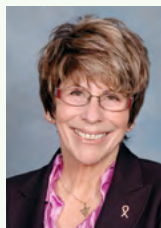
## Board of Education



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*Student Member*

## SVUSD Appreciates its Student-Centered Employees



**Dr. Crystal Turner**  
*Superintendent*

Like the beginning of a new year, the start of spring brings an opportunity to pause and reflect on what has been accomplished during the winter. A common thread is that Saddleback Valley Unified School District employees are student-centered. Again and again, as we celebrate the moments of going above and beyond, our employees exhibit humility for their dedicated work and service to our students. To highlight a few examples:

Amidst the biggest winter storm in 30 years, a group of SVUSD's sixth grade students and staff were enjoying a winter wonderland at camp in the local mountains. When it became apparent that upcoming snowfall would interrupt their scheduled return home, it was time to jump into action and find a creative way to transport them home. It took a concerted team effort of school administration, teachers, District administration, and the fabulous drivers at First Student to find a solution. After two trips to the base of the mountain resulting in denied access by California Highway Patrol, the drivers seized a small window of open roads and persevered through multiple trips with small buses up and down the mountain to bring our students and staff home safely.

Amira Hana, playground assistant at Melinda Heights Elementary, was recently selected as the 2023 Classified Employee of the Year Orange County finalist in the area of Security Services. Ms. Hana will next be considered for the competition at the state level. Her dedication to building relationships with the students paves the way for her to be a trusted adult on campus. This engaging practice supports each and every student at her school in learning social-emotional skills while out on the playground, translating into success in the classroom and connection to school.

SVUSD recently held its annual Principal for a Day event in which we invited community leaders to spend

some time at our schools shadowing the principal. While our principals have a front-and-center job in the eyes of the community, what is not often seen are the roles at their schools as a behind the scenes problem solver, support system, data analyst, listening ear, curriculum specialist, communicator, out of the box thinker, and systems creator for student success. Our community partnerships are vital to the individual programs that make each of our schools special and we are so grateful for their support and the opportunity to witness the incredible leadership at each of our schools.

To facilitate student seamless transitions from sixth grade to intermediate school and from eighth grade to high schools, SVUSD's teachers and site administrators orchestrated district-wide field trips for students to be introduced to and welcomed at the schools they will attend in the fall. Students had the opportunity to explore their new campuses, meet students at their new schools, and get to experience what it feels like to be a part of their next school community.

We look forward to the excitement that the end of the school year brings, and thank our employees for their excellent service to our SVUSD students!

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**Kay Coop**  
Founder/Publisher



# School News

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Covering the  
**SADDLEBACK VALLEY  
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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Superintendent Dr. Turner begins this issue on page 3 with her message highlighting student-centered employees. There are always challenges and it is reassuring to know employees work as a team and step up to the challenges.

This is the time of year that schools honor their Teachers of the Year. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all teachers. I can't think of anything more rewarding or having more responsibility than being a parent or teacher.

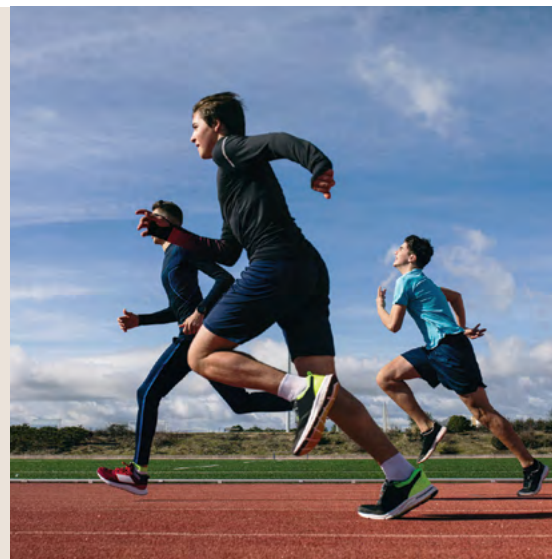
Be sure to enter our word search contests on page 24 & 27 (all ages may enter). Congratulations to Henry Maffetore our February winner!



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## Educational Services

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**Liza Zielasko**  
Assistant  
Superintendent

### National School Counseling Week

In February, SVUSD celebrated National School Counseling Week. This gave us an opportunity to recognize the unique contributions and tremendous impact school counselors have in helping students succeed. School counselors implement a comprehensive program designed to improve academic achievement, build college and career readiness, and enhance

social-emotional development for TK – 12th grade students. SVUSD has continued to increase its staffing of counselors and now all elementary, intermediate and comprehensive high schools have a school counseling program that provides classroom guidance lessons, small group skill-building workshops, and individual short-term counseling. School counselors also support parents and guardians through



**Tami Bean & Nikole Florin-Smith**  
from Serrano Intermediate

consultation, parent education workshops, and linkage to community resources. For more information please visit [schoolcounselor.org](http://schoolcounselor.org). Thank you SVUSD school counselors for helping our students and families thrive!

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## Human Resources

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**Dr. Darvin Jackson**  
Assistant  
Superintendent

### Welcome Jade Miyashiro

The Human Resources Department would like to welcome Jade Miyashiro as the new Credential Analyst/Secretary for certificated staff. As she was



an existing member of the Tech II team, we wish to congratulate her on this promotion.

We wish to remind all staff members that SVUSD is offering a \$500 incentive for referring candidates to fill classified positions. The candidate must complete probation in order for the referring employee to receive the incentive. In addition, the classified candidate would receive \$500 as a hiring incentive contingent on passing probation.

On April 22, 2023, SVUSD will be hosting a hiring fair for all interested potential teachers. This Super Saturday Event will be held at the District Office. Candidates may apply through EdJoin for all vacant certificated positions.



## CAMP PINNIPED

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# Business Services

25631 Peter A. Hartman Way, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/586-1234



**Robert Craven**  
Assistant  
Superintendent

## Grant for School Safety

The Saddleback Valley Unified School District recently received a grant from Orange County Board of Supervisors Fifth District representative Katrina Foley's office for school safety. The grant is funding a pilot program for enhanced video surveillance technologies and communication radios. The radios were recently distributed to all school sites while the video technologies are in a pilot phase.

Over the last 18 months, the District completed an external site safety assessment of all school sites. Based upon recommendations from the assessment, the Board of Directors allocated an additional two million dollars in funding to enhance District safety measures. Funding will go to enhance perimeter boundaries, video technology, communication, emergency preparedness, and training. Many of these new initiatives are underway.

During the year, the District works closely with law enforcement and many other local districts and agencies to improve safety and security. These include participating in conferences and table top exercises for administrators and District staff. Law enforcement and District leaders are currently working on evaluating and upgrading site drills.

The District hosts regular parent safety meetings that cover a wide variety of topics, including Internet Safety, Fentanyl Awareness, E-Bike Safety and College Hazing. Through these partnerships, narcan and staff training on administering narcan was provided to all school sites.

Through District funds, additional supplies, in the form of emergency backpacks and buckets were delivered to school sites. Site inventories are ongoing to determine future emergency supply needs.

On the District website under the safety section, a safety timeline is posted which outlines safety enhancements undertaken by the District over the last six years. The site also includes Board presentations and safety resources for students, parents, and the community. <https://www.svusd.org/departments/business-services/safety>



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## Cielo Vista *Elementary School*

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**Dr. Frances Hansell**  
*Principal*

### Teacher of the Year

Cielo Vista is proud of Chris Concepcion, an amazing UTK teacher! Chris delights our young learners with a classroom full of inquiry and discovery, a place where every child belongs and shares in the wonder of TK! Mrs. C., is a fine educator who embraces calmness, consistency and compassion. In her own words, "Teaching Transitional

Kindergarten for the past ten years has given me a special passion for early childhood education. I love helping students navigate the complex world of being four and five, giving them tools they need to regulate emotions, gain self-esteem, and become independent learners. I provide a safe, nurturing environment where all students can explore, make mistakes, and develop the skills they need to be successful, responsible members of the community. I also value partnerships I make with families and maintain those connections long after the student leaves." Congratulations, Mrs. C!



## de Portola *Elementary School*

27031 Preciados Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/586-5830  
[www.svUSD.org/deportola](http://www.svUSD.org/deportola)



**Brendon Morrow**  
*Principal*

### Teacher of the Year

Meet our school's Teacher of the Year, Mrs. Heather Mezak. Mrs. Mezak has been a de Portola teacher for 25 years. In her life at home, she is

the proud mother of twins. While at school, she serves as mentor, a patient soul, and as a strong supporter of her profession. Mrs. Mezak not only serves a class of thirty young students throughout any given day, she also mentors future teachers, others new to the profession, and also acts as a visionary communicator to others regarding the evolving needs of our diverse group of Kindergarteners. With her breadth of experience in working with Kindergarten through third graders in her past, Mrs. Mezak remains a staunch supporter of respecting and empowering young children. Congratulations to Mrs. Mezak for being voted by her colleagues to represent de Portola as our 2023 Teacher of the Year!



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**Kristin Thomsen**  
*Principal*

### **Katie Mau, Teacher of the Year**

Del Cerro is celebrating Katie Mau, our Teacher of the Year. This is Ms. Mau's third year teaching at Del Cerro Elementary School. Prior to becoming a classroom teacher, Ms. Mau worked as a behavioral therapist working with children with Autism and their families. These early experiences and skill set have played a foundational role in the educator she is today as evidenced by

her genuine relationships with her students and her ability to support and engage learners of all abilities. Ms. Mau's high expectations for learning and behavior is shown in her students' strong academic growth and pride in themselves. Amidst all of this, she makes it a priority to create lessons that are engaging and motivating because she believes learning should be fun for her learners! As a result, her

classroom is a place where students are excited to learn and also feel safe to take on challenges.

Ms. Mau feels her role as a Saddleback Valley Unified School District educator is important because she has the opportunity to contribute to building a school and community where all students and families feel they are seen, valued, and welcomed. To support our students in connecting with one another, she created the Kindness Crew this year. All students can be a part of spreading kindness and contribute to helping build a positive school culture. On Fridays you can find Ms. Mau and the Kindness Crew out front before school playing music, cheering, waving, and greeting students and families as they arrive to school! Ms. Mau believes that students and communities who feel connected and empowered can achieve great things! Del Cerro agrees, and we are so grateful that Ms. Mau is a part of our staff!

## Del Lago *Elementary School*

27181 Entidad, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/855-1125 • [www.svusd.org/dellago](http://www.svusd.org/dellago)



**Jonathan Kaplan**  
*Principal*

### **New Del Lago Student Certificates**

In order to align our student awards with our Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) school-wide theme of W.A.V.E.

(Work Together, Act Responsibly, Value

Kindness Encourage Safety), we held a contest for our sixth-grade students to design new certificates. The results were impressive! Students used their creativity to design over 20 certificates in each category. To determine a winner, our entire staff was encouraged to vote so that everyone on our campus had an opportunity to participate. The fun began with our latest Flag Friday celebration (first Friday of every month) on March 3. The students enjoyed earning these awards, the artists seeing their

designs as our new certificates, and the staff loved the equity of each category. Teachers now have the exciting task of seeking out students who demonstrate these traits monthly. Del Lago students rock the WAVE! Go Dolphins!







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## Esperanza *Special Education*

25121 Pradera Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/830-5470  
[www.svusd.org/esperanza](http://www.svusd.org/esperanza)



**Raymund Bueche**  
Principal

### Celebrating Esperanza's Teacher of the Year

Maura Miles Esperanza's the teacher of the year for 2022-2023. Maura is in her third year at the Adult Transition Program at Esperanza Education Center. Maura is always willing to put in extra effort for the students at Esperanza. As the ASB advisor, she creates a positive school culture by hosting small events during the year. She is also the force behind our three dances.

The unique themes and decorations are inspired by the students and come to life in unique ways. Maura Miles is a genuinely caring SPED teacher who always strives to serve her students in a way that benefits their growth and IEP goals. She is creative, energetic, professional, enjoys collaborating with staff, and always has new ideas to keep learning fresh and fun. She takes the time to create relationships with her staff and students, which is easily noted when in her classroom. She is a fantastic member of the Esperanza ATP team and community!

## El Toro *High School*

25255 Toledo Way, Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/586-6333 •  
[www.svusd.org/eths](http://www.svusd.org/eths)



**Dr. James Martin**  
Principal

### Full STEAM Ahead!

Students in the [SVUSD STEAM Academy at El Toro High School](http://www.svusd.org/eths) have been collaborating on a variety of amazing cross-curricular projects that integrate their core academic and CTE (Career Tech Education) classes. You may have seen the ETHS Bioregion Horses our students made last year. The following are among the many fantastic projects our STEAM students are

working on this year:

Students in "English 1: Writing Games for Social Change" have worked with our Digital Media Arts program to create video game characters and settings to present to Blizzard Entertainment (creator of many popular video games) for feedback. Soon they will collaborate with our Engineering program to 3D-print related items for their game and our Art program to create artwork that brings their game to life as part of their pitch to Blizzard.

Students in "Biology of the Living Earth and Sustainable Agriculture," "World History by Design," and our Digital Media Arts program have teamed up on the Green Campus Action Plan this year to address recycling around campus, adding greenspaces or plant walls for health and wellness, and decreasing food waste on campus. They are hosting our STEAM Green Day event on April 19th and will use all of this to not only build on our campus health and wellness culture, but to have our school designated as a Green Ribbon School.

Our Computer Science and Engineering programs have collaborated on computer builds in which CS students researched specs and compatibility while engineering students designed and built the cases. Once both hardware and cases were ready, the teams built their computers, installed operating systems and ensured they were fully functional desktops. You may have seen one of these beautiful machines highlighted at a recent Board meeting!

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# Foothill Ranch *Elementary School*

1 Torino Dr., Foothill Ranch, CA 92610 • 949/470-4885 • [www.svusd.org/foothillranch](http://www.svusd.org/foothillranch)



**Deborah Shaver**  
*Principal*

## Workshops and Resources

Foothill Ranch is proud of its parent education programming. Parents are encouraged to attend workshops throughout the year. The ELAC (English Learner Advisory Committee) meetings often include a parent education component such as how to support your multilingual learner at school and while taking the ELPAC (English Language Proficiency Assessments for California). Our bilingual parent advocate, Mrs. Mendoza-Mayordomo, works closely with community organizations to provide additional workshops for all parents such as “Understanding Childhood Depression”; “Cybersafety Cop”; “Screen Management in the Family”; and “The A, B, Cs of Parenting a Child with ADHD” as well as providing resources for Triple P parenting. One of the fun things we like to do is to raffle off related resources for parents to dive deeper into each topic.



**Mrs. Stevenson, FRE Asst. Principal, and Mrs. Mendoza-Mayordomo, Bilingual Parent Advocate, pulled a ticket to raffle off prizes related to parent education.**

# Gates *Dual Language Immersion Elementary School*

23882 Landisview Ave., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/837-2260 • [www.svusd.org/gates](http://www.svusd.org/gates)



**Diana Clearwater**  
*Principal*

## Teacher of the Year

Gates Dual Language Immersion Elementary School is proud to celebrate Adrian Rodriguez as Teacher of the Year! Mr. Rodriguez' 4th grade students are so fortunate to be members of such an incredible classroom community. Everyone who enters his classroom comments on the uniquely tranquil environment that allows students to feel comfortable, to take risks, and to love coming to school every day! Mr. Rodriguez not only makes an impact on his students, but as the grade level lead, his quiet leadership style allows all colleagues to be equal partners in their professional collaboration. In addition, as a mentor teacher to UCI bilingual teacher candidates, Mr. Rodriguez is helping to shape the future of education. Finally, not only is he a



Gates teacher, he is the proud parent of two awesome Gator students. We are so fortunate to have Adrian Rodriguez as part of our Gator family!

## Glen Yermo *Elementary School*

26400 Trabuco Rd., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/586-6766 • [www.svusd.org/glenyermo](http://www.svusd.org/glenyermo)



**Jennifer Televik**  
*Principal*

### Family STEAM Night

Glen Yermo Elementary hosted a Family STEAM Night in March featuring math and science activities for all ages. Our awesome teachers helped to lead many of the stations including math games, engineering challenges, and robotics. Families were able to try out some of the math centers that students use during the school day and take home materials to play the games at home. Students and adults enjoyed building a house of cards and making their own bouncy balls, while Ozobots and Vex Robotics were a hit for coding. Students also helped out during the event by showcasing grade level science units and our ST Math program, and parents took home resources to help their children with the program at home. To complete the evening, our fabulous PTA provided pizza and pie, in honor of National Pi Day, for all of our Mountain Lion families.



## La Madera *Elementary School*

25350 Serrano Rd., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/770-1415 • [www.svusd.org/lamadera](http://www.svusd.org/lamadera)



**Jennifer Gass**  
*Principal*

### We Love Our Teacher of the Year

We are pleased to recognize Mrs. Gorrien as our La Madera Elementary Teacher of the Year. Mrs. Gorrien has been a classroom teacher for 28 years, all of them at La Madera! She currently teaches our 6<sup>th</sup> grade GATE class and is a member of our leadership team. When asked why she believes the role of a teacher is important, Mrs. Gorrien replied, “Teachers are role models and our influence is far-reaching. Each day I recognize that I am modeling perseverance, hard work and consistency. I am sure I also model making mistakes, as well as the curiosity to find out what I do not know. Another responsibility I have as an educator is nurturing a love of learning in each child so that they may grow into productive members of society.” Mrs. Gorrien is an important member of our Koala family. We are grateful for her dedication to our school community.



# La Paz Intermediate School

25151 Pradera Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/830-1720 • [www.svusd.org/lapaz](http://www.svusd.org/lapaz)



**Tiffany Harville**  
Principal

## Together We Truly are Better!

At La Paz we believe that collaborating with our community contributes to the success we see on our campus. We hosted the General Manager of Raising Canes, Mr. Randall Hill, as Principal for the Day! La Paz Leopards absolutely loved the Canes swag!! La Paz hosted College and Career Day on March 6, an all day event for students highlighting pathways to California colleges and universities, as well as careers. Our AVID students presented admission requirements and information on famous alumni from institutions such as Saddleback Valley College, Fashion Institute, and UC Berkeley. Vital Link, a Career Technical Education (CTE) organization provided students with interactive exhibits ranging from Drone Technology to Green Energy. Other career presentations on campus



included the airline industry, environmental advocacy and justice, as well as fashion and design. The future is bright for our Leopards. It is never too early to start preparing for the future.

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## Laguna Hills *High School*

25401 Paseo de Valencia, Laguna Hills, CA 92653 • 949/770-5447 • [www.svusd.org/lhhs](http://www.svusd.org/lhhs)



**Bill Hinds**  
*Principal*

### Welcome Class of 2027!

Laguna Hills High School welcomed the Class of 2027 during SVUSD's first 8th Grade Day on Monday, March 13th. Our incoming Hawks were greeted by our instrumental music program performing pep tunes and ASB students excited to teach them about being a Hawk. Eighth

graders then had an opportunity to talk to student representatives from various sports, clubs, and special programs. After performances from pep squad and Unit 21, 8th graders were divided into three groups. They experienced small group activities, a campus tour, and our electives showcase in the theater complete with performances from choir, instrumental music, ComedySportz, and drama. During snack, students gathered around the quad and watched the high school students compete in pep rally games and dodgeball. A fun time was had by all and we cannot wait until the Class of 2027 officially joins us at The Nest this August!



## Lake Forest *Elementary School*

21801 Pittsford Dr., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/830-9945 • [www.svusd.org/lakeforest](http://www.svusd.org/lakeforest)



**Audra Bailey**  
*Principal*

### Reaching Our Community

Lake Forest Elementary loves our community and is always looking for ways to give back. This year we saw a need and decided to act on it. Our Dolphin Closet was the idea of our amazing office clerk, Mary

Core. All she had to do was say the word and our school counselor, office manager, and PTO all jumped in to help. Lake Forest's Dolphin Closet helps provide clothes and more to our families in need. Community members donate clean, gently used clothes. Volunteers hang and fold the clothes. Twice a month, the Dolphin Closet is open to our community. Families can stop by and take home a bag or two of clothes. The Dolphin Closet opened in February of 2023, and so far, it has been a huge success.



# La Tierra *Early Childhood Center*

24150 Lindley St., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/707-5276 • [www.svusd.org/latierra](http://www.svusd.org/latierra)



**Emily Arias**  
*Principal*

## Rain and Rainbows

Students and staff worked together to create the paper chain for this beautiful rainbow that hangs in the hallway at La Tierra. With all of the rain we have had this year, the students are learning about the weather and specifically about rain and rainbows. We are also using the rainbow to build color recognition. Students are given the opportunity to observe and identify each color. We have extended this activity to our art curriculum as well. Students mix different colors of paint together to investigate the outcomes. La Tierra also has color days where the staff and students wear a particular color on that day to help with color identification. We utilize the rainbow to foster learning and communication as we transition through the hallway to different activities. The team at La Tierra doesn't miss a single opportunity for learning.



Preschool students point to the green stripe in the rainbow and then identified other green items on the wall.

**CAMP ALISO VIEJO**  
2023  
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# Linda Vista Magnet Elementary School

25222 Pericia Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/830-0970 • [www.svusd.org/lindavista](http://www.svusd.org/lindavista)



**Shannon Wyatt**  
Principal

## Congratulations Lauren Kaplan

Linda Vista is excited and incredibly honored to introduce everyone to Lauren Kaplan, our 2023 Teacher of the Year! Lauren has been a teacher at Linda Vista for five years and has made a significant impact on students, colleagues and the community. Her passion for teaching and her ability to inspire

her students are a few of the qualities that make her an incredible educator. She is committed to reading a positive and inclusive classroom environment where every student feels valued and supported. Lauren uses innovative teaching strategies and incorporates technology and hands-on activities to make learning more engaging for her students. Beyond the classroom, Lauren is a valuable member of Linda Vista's leadership team. She is a steward of equity and an advocate for social justice. Congratulations, Mrs. Kaplan. We are incredibly fortunate to have you at Linda Vista!



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## Lomarena *Elementary School*

25100 Earhart Rd., Laguna Hills, CA 92653 • 949/581-1370 • [www.svUSD.org/lomarena](http://www.svUSD.org/lomarena)



**Grace Cruikshank**  
Principal

### Celebrating Community

The month of March is National Reading Month and Lomarena has been celebrating in style. Included in our “Lomareada” month activities are our daily Stop Drop and Read time, Book Fair, Pick-A-Book Picnic with families, and Community Read In, which featured guests from

all over Laguna Hills and Saddleback Unified School District. Among our many generous readers, guests included our School Resource Officer, the Orange County Fire Authority, SVUSD School Board Members, our Superintendent Dr. Crystal Turner, Assistant Superintendents, a train conductor from Irvine Park, principals from the past, retired teachers, and even our Laguna Hills Mayor Janine Heft.



## Los Alisos *Intermediate School*

25171 Los Lobos Way, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/830-9700 • [www.svUSD.org/losalisos](http://www.svUSD.org/losalisos)



**Michael Marzilli**  
Principal

### STEAM Night

On March 8th, Los Alisos Intermediate held a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematic)

night hosted by our PTSA. Our students enjoyed an evening of building, problem solving and teamwork with the help of UCI undergrads who ran the event. The evening was filled with hands-on science, math, and engineering activities for students and families to complete together. The event included a range of activities covering different STEAM topics and connections to exciting STEAM careers.



## Melinda Heights *Elementary School*

21001 Rancho Trabuco, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 • 949/888-7311 • [www.svusd.org/melindaheights](http://www.svusd.org/melindaheights)



**Kathryn Martin**  
*Principal*

### **Dedicated to Kids!**

As the school year draws to a close, Melinda Heights is thrilled to honor some fantastic people. Mrs. Amira Hana, an outstanding Playground Assistant, is a finalist for Orange County Classified Employee of the Year! Amira takes pride and ownership in her role at Melinda

Heights. She is highly skilled as a supervisor and a dedicated supporter of the children at school. Her kindness, work ethic, and humble spirit are priceless. Also providing support for ALL students is the Melinda Heights PTA. The goal of the PTA is to open doors for students and families in an engaging, inclusive, safe and fun learning environment. PTA has sponsored many activities this year at no charge to families. Their inclusive spirit and love for students and teachers have earned them Unit of the Year recognition by the Fourth District PTA (Orange County and part of LA!). Their contributions go far beyond imagination.



**Celebrating our Fabulous Playground Assistant**

## Mission Viejo *High School*

25025 Chrisanta Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/837-7722 • [www.svusd.org/mvhs](http://www.svusd.org/mvhs)



**Tricia Osborne**  
*Principal*

### **MVHS AVID Rocks!**

Mission Viejo High School AVID program is committed to the success of students, especially for the students who are first generation in their families to attend and/or graduate from four-year universities. Of the 108 AVID students in the program, the average

GPA's are 3.0 or above. The AVID 11th grade class continues to win the highest GPA trophy with a 3.32 GPA! AVID Senior Standout Ethan Beltran DeAnda will celebrate his recognition on April 18th at the UCI Barclay Theater along with other AVID Senior Standouts from each high school in Orange County. AVID students recently visited

the following colleges and universities: Call State Fullerton, UC Irvine, Saddleback College, OCC College and Cal Baptist University. AVID Seniors have received multiple acceptances from four-year universities, including Cal Poly Pomona, Cal State Fullerton, Arizona State University, UC Merced, and Colorado State University! Go Diablos!



## Montevideo *Elementary School*

24071 Carrillo Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/586-8050 • [www.svusd.org/montevideo](http://www.svusd.org/montevideo)



**Lisa Graham**  
*Principal*

### An Amazing Educator

Kim Pugh is amazing... a dedicated, beloved teacher! Colleagues enthusiastically share, "Kim exhibits professionalism and passion for teaching like no other. She is kind and respectful... a team player. She pours her heart

and soul into her classroom and students. The rapport that she has with students is amazing; they truly love and respect her, and she loves and respects them." As a principal, it is a joy to walk into her classroom and experience the positive and fun environment she creates. She is always looking for innovative ways for the students to learn and show their learning. She creates

STEAM projects that motivate the students to think outside of the box. We all agree, it is a privilege to work with an educator as fine as Kim Pugh. Her passion, creativity, fun nature, and smiles are contagious. Montevideo proudly celebrates Kim Pugh as our Teacher of the Year!



## Olivewood *Elementary School*

23391 Dune Mear Rd., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/837-6682 • [www.svusd.org/olivewood](http://www.svusd.org/olivewood)



**Alex Perez**  
*Principal*

### Olivewood's Teacher of the Year

Olivewood would like to give a huge congratulations to our Teacher of the Year, Kate Rayburn. Ms. Rayburn's love for teaching comes from a place of wanting to build a solid educational foundation for students while instilling a love for learning. She creates a warm, welcoming, and inclusive

environment where students can be who they are and have an engaging learning experience. Kate says, "It is rewarding to witness the natural curiosity students have as well as their "aha" moments when they master a concept." Ms. Rayburn is a positive role model that students and staff look up to and caregivers appreciate. She is the kind of teacher who believes in offering support to all students. When Kate is not at school she enjoys traveling, playing games with family, walking, playing word games, and baking. Needless to say, she is very loved and appreciated by all at Olivewood.



## Portola Hills *Elementary School*

19422 Saddleback Ranch Rd., Trabuco Canyon, CA 92679 • 949/459-9370 • [www.svUSD.org/portolahills](http://www.svUSD.org/portolahills)



**Ed MacNevin**  
Principal

### Student Council Improve School Climate

The goal of Portola Hills Elementary School's Student Council Committee is to contribute to the school community as well as the community at large. The committee meets with Mrs. Heh, our amazing student council advisor, about once a week before school to discuss plans to serve at school and

beyond. Each month, the committee plans and develops a craft project to present to one of our classrooms as an act of kindness and goodwill. Additionally, in early March, the committee collected more than 200 toiletry items to donate to a local food bank for distribution. School staff members have seen growth in our student council members, both socially and emotionally, as they think about service to others as a rewarding activity.



## Rancho Cañada *Elementary School*

21801 Winding Way, Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/786-5252 • [www.svUSD.org/ranchocanada](http://www.svUSD.org/ranchocanada)



**Jennifer Kajdasz**  
Principal

### STEAM Night Makes a Comeback

It's baaackkk...Rancho Cañada held a fun-filled event for our families this past month, an experience that has not been able to happen for the last few years. We sure are glad it made a reappearance and many others agreed! Our STEAM night brought

in over 500 participants to enjoy various science, technology, engineering, art and math activities for over two hours of learning! Students and guests were able to play math games, learn coding basics, build hoop gliders and spaghetti structures, draw still art, and explore how 3-D vision works (thank you to Mrs. Megow for leading this one). Our very own Professor Rudy was also there to teach us about dry ice sublimation. The night was rounded out with everyone's favorites: the outdoor observatory and the hair-raising static electricity globe (lots of laughs on those new hair-dos). Thank you to our amazing PTA for hosting this event!



**Professor Rudy teaching students about "monkey burps"  
(aka dry ice sublimation)**

# Rancho Santa Margarita *Intermediate School*

21931 Alma Aldea, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 • 949/459-8253 • [www.rsmintermediate.com](http://www.rsmintermediate.com)



**Tyler Morgan**  
*Principal*

## RSM VAPA

Rancho Santa Margarita Intermediate has focused on providing students with opportunities to participate in the Visual and Performing Arts. Under the guidance of Mr. Phil Felix, the RSM Intermediate band and orchestra performed at the Mission Viejo High School Music Festival on March 9 and 10. RSM students performed exceptionally, with the band receiving an “Excellent”

overall rating (second highest), with one judge giving them a “Superior” (highest), and our RSM orchestra receiving an overall “Superior” (highest) rating! Our band and orchestra consisted of beginning, intermediate, and advanced players and entertained the crowd and judges. We cannot be more proud of all the hard work and dedication our teachers, coaches, and students have put in this year, and the awards are confirmation of this. We look forward to the growth of our VAPA programs here at RSM and in the Saddleback Valley Unified School District.



# Robinson *Elementary School*

21400 Lindsay Dr., Trabuco Canyon, CA 92679 • 949/589-2446 • [www.svusd.org/robinson](http://www.svusd.org/robinson)



**Suzy McMasters**  
*Principal*

## Robinson Celebrates Inclusion Week

During the week of March 6, Robinson Elementary School joined SVUSD in celebrating Inclusion Spirit Week to bring awareness to different disabilities. Each day at lunchtime, our Rattlers joined in Unified Games and activities, from dance parties

with bubbles to parachute play and learning new games like nine square in the air. Our students celebrated the week by pledging to include each other and with different spirit dress days. On Monday, we were team players and wore our favorite jerseys; on Tuesday, we wore camouflage because not all disabilities are visible; on Wednesday, we stepped out of our comfort zone and wore sweats to school; on Thursday, we wore our favorite hats to school for Hats-off to Making a Difference; and on Friday, we wore mismatched clothes because it's okay to be different. It was a great week, and at Robinson we love to play Unified!



# San Joaquin *Elementary School*

22182 Barbera, Laguna Hills, CA 92653 • 949/581-3450 • [www.svUSD.org/sanjoaquin](http://www.svUSD.org/sanjoaquin)



**David Shun**  
*Principal*

## Career and College Week

San Joaquin proudly hosted Career and College Week which merged aspects of SVUSD's vision of college and career readiness and our AVID Elementary program. We had the honor of hosting guests from the Sheriff's department,

the Marines, and an author, all of whom shared their college and career path taken to achieve their desired careers. One guest brought their entire team and stunt film car! A film crew from a local company, brought their stunt film car, complete with remote controlled arm and camera. They explained that the four person crew have to work as a team and each has a specific role to play (2 Stunt Drivers, Arm Operator, and Camera Operator) in order to successfully film action motor vehicle scenes in

movies and commercials. All students, from Kindergarten through sixth grade, were empowered to not only chat with the crew, but operate the arm and camera!



## Santiago *STEAM Magnet*

24982 Rivendell Dr., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/586-2820 • [www.svUSD.org/santiago](http://www.svUSD.org/santiago)



**Howard Johnston**  
*Principal*

## The Library Lounge

A while back, Santiago moved their library up near the playground to give students an alternative activity during their break times. This gives all students multiple chances to visit the library and pick a good book to read. Developing an outdoor lounge seemed like a great opportunity to extend the

library for all students. With the assistance of PTA, parents, students and staff, as well as local businesses, the Santiago Library Lounge broke ground. Since then, an outdoor seating area has been created with pavers, raised planter beds, and many donated olive trees have been planted. In time, a tiered amphitheater used for relaxing, learning, and presenting will be added. Santiago has continued to increase the number of outdoor learning spaces to assist students throughout the campus. The Library Lounge will be another great space for all who love to read books or want to sit and chat with friends.



## Serrano Intermediate School

24642 Jeronimo Rd., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/586-3221 • [www.svusd.org/serrano](http://www.svusd.org/serrano)



**David Young**  
Principal

### Farm & Food Lab

Serrano's 7th grade STEAM Village recently went on a field trip to the Farm and Food Lab in Irvine.

As 7th graders prepare for their 3rd trimester capstone project, their driving question is "How can locations with limited natural resources grow food quickly using hydroponics?" The Farm & Food

Lab specializes in methods and techniques that can be used in urban farming. Our 7th grade STEAM science classroom is equipped with a hydroponic garden, and students are being challenged with the task of growing plants in this environment of limited space and water. This field trip enabled students to gather information about growing plants in these types of environments and practically apply this knowledge to growing their own plants at Serrano.

Students also toured the farm, saw a greenhouse, chicken coop, aquaponics and were able to hold worms while learning about the benefits of vermicomposting—slimy fun!



## Silverado High School

25632 Peter A. Hartman Way, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/586-8800 • [www.svusd.org/silverado](http://www.svusd.org/silverado)



**David Gordon**  
Principal

### The Silverado Eagles are SOARing!

Trimester II ended on March 3rd and twelve students graduated!

This brings our graduate total

to fifteen for the school year. Trimester III began on March 6th and SHS welcomed 21 new students to our campus. Penny Wars, our annual fundraiser supporting the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, ended on February 24th and it was a huge success! Silverado's charitable work continued into March with our second blood drive of the year on March 1st. Seventeen students donated blood and Silverado helped to save 54 lives.



# Trabuco *Elementary School*

31052 Trabuco Canyon Rd., Trabuco Canyon, CA 92678 • 949/858-0343 • [www.svusd.org/trabuco](http://www.svusd.org/trabuco)



**Dr. Lindsey Gatfield**  
*Principal*

## Home on Our Farm

Students in kindergarten through 6th grade are enjoying learning lessons on our farm at Trabuco Elementary School! Students have been learning how to take care of our chicken, sheep, goats, donkeys, and more. The 3rd graders pictured here were

practicing picking up chickens confidently and safely. They had the opportunity to feed the chickens as well! Students at Trabuco have access to the farm during recess time and participate in farm lessons during class time. Farmer Darcie and Farmer Kelly are working hard to prepare students for our Trabuco Hoedown on May 11th. Students will showcase some of our incredible animals. We invite you to come join the Trabuco Elementary community and celebrate our amazing students and campus at our Hoedown!



## Milestones and Firsts—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](mailto:Kay@schoolnewsrollcall.com) Please put Saddleback Valley in the subject line.

**Entries must be received by May 15, 2023**

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

Thank you Barkate / Nehi Orthodontics for sponsoring our contests!

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| COLLEGE     | TRAVEL        |
| DATE        | AIRPLANE RIDE |
| LOVE        | BALLOON RIDE  |
| ENGAGEMENT  | CRUISE        |
| MARRIAGE    | FIRST TOOTH   |





## SVUSD *Virtual Academy K-12*

21001 Rancho Trabuco Rd., Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 • 949/580-3457 • [www.svUSD.org/virtualacademy](http://www.svUSD.org/virtualacademy)



**Glenn Giokaris**  
*Principal*

### Chart Your Course

The SVUSD Virtual Academy (SVA) offers students an opportunity to chart their own course both inside and outside the classroom. Technology and online learning tools provide students

with flexibility and personalization – students are able to access their classes, interact with classmates, and complete coursework online which allows them to live a balanced life, complete college classes, work, travel, or explore their passions outside of the classroom. In addition, our



and film screenings, SVA has created a community that supports students' well-being and academic success. We invite you to see for yourself if SVA's flexible, engaging, and supportive learning environment will help you to chart your own course.

entire staff works with students and parents to create a place where students belong. Through activities such as in-person learning days, outings for our K-6 families, clubs,

## Trabuco Hills *High School*

27501 Mustang Run, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/768-1934 • [www.svUSD.org/thhs](http://www.svUSD.org/thhs)



**Alicia Foulk**  
*Principal*

### Every Student Succeeding

Nominated by Saddleback Valley Management Association (SVMTA) and SVUSD ACSA Board, THHS Student, Cruz Melendez, was honored at the ACSA

Every Student Succeeding Awards on March 3, 2023. Cruz has always been an actively engaged student here at THHS. Since freshman year he has participated in several sports and been a valued member of our school community. Cruz is an incredible model of resilience, perseverance and leadership. On May 24, 2022 Cruz was hit head-on and endured multiple injuries that left him fighting for his life. After a leg amputation and countless hours of PT, he was able to return to school and was accepted into NAU. His daily optimism and outlook on life have never wavered, and he has become a source of hope and encouragement to all those around him.



**Alicia Foulk (Principal), Cruz Melendez, Todd Sautner (Teacher),  
Shanti Lunsford (School Counselor)**

## Trabuco Mesa *Elementary School*

21301 Ave de las Flores, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 • 949/858-3339 • [www.svsud.org/trabucomesa](http://www.svsud.org/trabucomesa)



**Caryn McGrew**  
*Principal*

### Family Engagement

Trabuco Mesa Students and Families have enjoyed spending quality time together this year at school. Our amazing PTA are strong supporters of family engagement and make these events possible at our school.

In October, we had a Trunk or Treat event that included students dressing up and parents decorating their trunks, hosting games and giving out treats. In March, we had Lunch with a Loved One that was so much fun! Students appreciated a picnic lunch and game time with a loved one during their lunch recess. The playground was covered with blankets of families and we had 699 adults in attendance. Recently we had amazing 80's themed dances for students and families to dance the night away! We are so thankful for our strong parent community who volunteer and bring fun family events to our school.



## Valencia *Elementary School*

25661 Paseo de Valencia, Laguna Hills, CA 92653 • 949/830-3650 • [www.svsud.org/valencia](http://www.svsud.org/valencia)



**Carolyn Fries**  
*Principal*

### Kindness Club

The Valencia Kindness Club was established in 2021 and with the help of teachers and several volunteers, the Kindness Club has been hard at work this year. The club meets two times a month and is currently 136 members strong, which is over one-fifth of the school's

population! Over the years, the Kindness Club has held a Joy Drive for the Jessie Reese Foundation, created cards for seniors, made busy boxes for children in the hospital, sang holiday songs at a local assisted living facility and provided special treats for our first responders. In February 2023, the Kindness Club hosted their 2nd annual Night of Giving event. Students and families were invited to participate in several stations promoting kindness and support for local charities. Here at Valencia, we are proud of our Kindness Club and the impact they are making in our school and local community.



## Aubtin's Review



**Aubtin M.**

### Be Brave

Title: *Geronimo Stilton – The Treasure Of Easter Island*

Author: Elisabetta Dami

Geronimo Stilton is a best-selling author running a newspaper called The Rodent's Gazette. He lives in New Mouse City, Mouse Island. Geronimo's sister Thea went to Easter Island in hope of finding treasure there. But then she was captured by pirates! Geronimo went to Easter Island looking for the same treasure in hope of finding Thea. Can Geronimo find Thea? Will he also find the treasure that Thea had been looking for in the first place? I recommend you read this book to find out.



This book is very funny and makes me laugh. I hope it will make you laugh too. This book also has very nice graphics and pictures.

Aubtin is a 1st Grader. When not playing, Aubtin does writing, reading, and drawing. He also likes sports, swimming, music, computers, and trains. He cares a lot about his family and friends.

## Yoona's Review



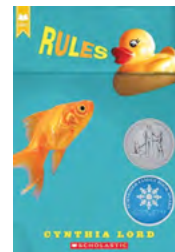
**Yoona C.**

### Friendships

Title: *Rules*

Author: Cynthia Lord

Catherine is a 12 year old girl that is talented in drawing. She has a brother named David. David is diagnosed with autism. David and Catherine's mom would go to OT. Catherine would sometimes come to. That's where Catherine met a friend called Jason. Jason is a teenage boy in a wheelchair that can't talk. They first meet when Catherine is bored and draws Jason. Jason catches her and tells his mom with his communication book. Jason's mom gets angry, but that soon leads to Catherine making word cards for Jason. Catherine also meets another person named Kristi. Kristi is a "cool" girl as said by Catherine. At first, Catherine is embarrassed to tell Kristi she has a brother that has autism and a friend who is in a wheelchair. Will Catherine learn to value good friendships? Will she find out what is truly important to her? Read to find out!



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

## Novelist –Word Search Contest

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When you have completed the word search, one word will be left and that word you email to: [Kay@schoolnewsrollcall.com](mailto:Kay@schoolnewsrollcall.com) Please put Saddleback Valley in the subject line.

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**Congratulations to Henry Maffetore**  
Winner of our February Word Search Contest!





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