

School News

Education + Communication = A Better Nation

Covering the Saddleback Valley Unified School District



Volume 6, Issue 22

June 2023



Congratulations to Santiago STEAM Elementary School for earning the 2023 CA Green Ribbon Award and the 20203 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Award!

Board of Education



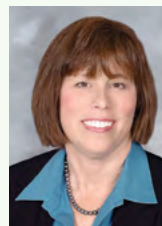
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Congrats Class of 2023!

Congratulations SVUSD Staff and Program Honorees



Dr. Crystal Turner
Superintendent

Saddleback Valley Unified School District's staff and programs were the recipients of multiple distinctions this spring!

SVUSD's Board of Education, Executive Cabinet and I recently greeted a school bus carrying multiple Orange County Department of Education officials and press members on a secret mission to surprise San Joaquin Elementary teacher, Mrs. Laura Blackie, as one of six 2024 Orange County Teachers of the Year! Mrs. Blackie is

passionate about student engagement, incorporating music into her instruction, building relationships, and connecting learning to what is going on in the world around them. Congratulations, Mrs. Blackie!

Santiago STEAM Magnet Elementary learned in early March that they are recipients of the 2023 California Green Ribbon: Green Achiever Award, followed in April by the prestigious honor of being named a 2023 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School. Santiago STEAM's programs incorporate sustainable design and operational practices that help students thrive while reducing their impact on the environment. Their program is built on three tiers: Tier I reduces environmental impact, Tier II improves health and wellness, and Tier III provides environmental and sustainability education. This May, Santiago STEAM has the honor of hosting the CA Green Ribbon Award ceremony for all award recipients in the state.

In conjunction with CSEA, our school sites and divisions have the opportunity each spring to choose a Classified Employee of the Year. I always look forward to this time of year because we get to recognize the impact our Classified Employees have made on students and their families, colleagues, and the District as a whole. Congratulations to the following honorees:

Child Care:	Diane Hanks
Cielo Vista:	Michelle Osborn
Del Lago:	Agness Kanaan
Esperanza:	Elaine Pelonia
Food Services:	Sally Medina
Foothill Ranch:	Joanne Masci
Gates:	Genesis Cruz
Glen Yermo:	Michelle Ramacher
Human Resources:	Dena Embree
La Madera:	Kristen Matthews
La Paz:	Wendy Adams
La Tierra:	Kara La Fleur
Lake Forest:	Tammy Klein
Language Acquisition:	Sabrina Krucli
Laguna Hills:	Julian Hurtado
Linda Vista:	Rachell Chasgteler
Lomarena:	Lourdes Trevino
Melinda Heights:	Angela Orosco

Mission Viejo:	Gloria Alvarez
Maintenance:	Steven Levasseur
Montevideo:	Tamara Friesen
Olivewood:	Mary Cowan
Portola Hills:	Cynthia Guerrero
Rancho Cañada:	Robert Capistran
Robinson:	Cathy Hanson
RSM:	Ricardo Duarte
San Joaquin:	Flor Saldana
Serrano:	Salvador Miranda Segura
Silverado:	Soudabeh Borujerdi
Technology:	Johnny Ng
Trabuco:	Raul Flores
Trabuco Hills:	Juan Medina
Valencia:	Toni Cuffari
Warehouse:	Thomas Cronin

From this esteemed list, one Classified Employee for each of eight categories is chosen to represent SVUSD in the county's competition. Please join me in congratulating our 2023 SVUSD Classified Employees of the Year!

- Clerical and Administrative Services —
Cynthia Guerrero, Clerk II; Portola Hills Elementary
- Custodial and Maintenance Services —
Thomas Cronin, Printing Press Technician; Print Shop
- Food and Nutrition Services —
Sally Medina, Food Services Assistant V Lead Worker; Food Service
- Health and Student Services —
Rachell Chasteler, Health Office Aide; Linda Vista Elementary
- Paraprofessional —
Cathy Hanson, Instructional Assistant Mod/Severe; Robinson Elementary
- Security Services —
Joanne Masci, Playground Assistant; Foothill Ranch Elementary
- Skilled Trades —
Steven Levasseur, Maintenance Electrician; Operations
- Technical Services — Johnny Ng, Technology Help Desk Technician; Information Technology

I appreciate the work of Saddleback Valley Unified School District staff, teachers, and administration for the strengths and dedication each brings to their position every day. While I've shared a few exciting highlights from this spring, I also wish to celebrate the many unnamed examples of incredible accomplishments achieved by students and staff every day in SVUSD schools. I want to wish you and your families a wonderful summer!



Kay Coop
Founder/Publisher



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UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dr. Turner begins this issue with her message on page 3 highlighting the staff and program honorees.

Our next issue is October 11. Have a wonderful summer and please remember to include the library among your activity choices.



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Robert Craven
Assistant
Superintendent

2023 Summer Projects

This summer brings many exciting facilities projects to SVUSD. With four major modernizations, plus deferred maintenance that includes, playgrounds, roofs, bleachers, concrete, fencing, and the HVAC replacement project concluding with the last of over 430 new units being installed, the campuses will be busy.

On the modernization side, the Foothill Ranch Elementary project includes an upgrade to the finishes in classrooms, a makerspace, a new TLC area with a separate entrance, and a remodeled MPR and Office.

Phase One of the Serrano Intermediate modernization was completed in 2022 with Phase Two launching this summer to improve access to the office while limiting access to classroom spaces. We'll remove all portable classrooms and build a two-story classroom building with flexible classroom space and restrooms.

The Rancho Cañada Elementary modernization continues this summer with a reconfiguration of the office

space. This new layout significantly improves access to the office and visibility to the front of the campus. Shade covers and landscaping will be installed throughout the campus, creating outdoor learning spaces. The library will be remodeled, including new furniture and technology.

The upcoming Robinson Elementary project is very exciting. The goal is to build a model all-inclusive school. This campus will meet the needs of all students and provide them with the resources and support they need to succeed. The playground equipment will be ADA accessible and available for all students. Sensory pathways with different textures, colors and activities will run throughout the campus. All classrooms will receive new finishes, furniture, and technology.

At Lake Forest Elementary, developer fees are being used to remove seven portable classrooms and build an eight-classroom building in a new location. This layout will increase the playground space and improve campus supervision.

Additionally, we have five playground replacements planned, and six sites will receive new shade structures.

Educational Services

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



Liza Zielasko
Assistant
Superintendent

Family Engagement Opportunities

One of the priorities of the Language Acquisition office for the 2023-2024 school year has been to increase opportunities for family engagement of our Multilingual Learners (MLs). This has been accomplished by offering events and activities that bring families onto our campuses and district office with the goal of offering education and tools that will support the academic success and social-emotional well being of our MLs.

Some of the events offered this year included a Resource Fair that saw the participation of more than 20 community partners. The fair consisted of both resource tables and 30-minute educational workshops on an array of topics. We also offered educational opportunities for our families including: parenting classes, adult English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and the Latino Literacy Project (LLP). The LLP is a program whose aim at the elementary level is to help families establish a literacy routine at home. At the secondary level, the program seeks to educate families on successfully navigating through high school and post-graduation options. We look forward to continuing all of these events and classes for the 2023-24 school year.

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Acknowledging Classified Employees



Dr. Al Mijares
Superintendent
Orange County
Dept. of Ed.

How do we begin to measure the importance of our classified school employees?

If you're not familiar with the term "classified," it's a designation that applies to office clerks, custodians, instructional assistants, technicians, bus drivers, IT professionals, accountants and other non-certificated staff who work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure our schools are running smoothly, and that our students have the support they need to thrive.

Classified workers are often the first to greet students and visitors when they arrive at a school, and they're responsible for making sure campuses are safe, equipped and ready to serve families on a daily basis. As such, their investment in our students and communities runs deep.

In May, OCDE and school districts across the county celebrated their efforts with activities and special messages tied to Classified School Employee Week. And particular attention was paid to nine staff members who further distinguished themselves as this year's Orange County Classified Employees.

By job category, they are:

- Clerical and Administrative Services: Adriana Ponce, Office Manager, Jordan Elementary School, Lowell Joint School District
- Custodial and Maintenance Services: Gene Martinez, Maintenance Operations Division Lead, Magnolia School District
- Food and Nutrition Services: Jaime Carranza, Senior Warehouseman, Anaheim Union High School District
- Health and Student Services: Emma Avalos, Family and Community Engagement Specialist, Anaheim Elementary Online Academy, Anaheim Elementary School District
- Paraprofessional: Josephine Walberg, Paraeducator 4, Adult Transition Program, Capistrano Unified School District
- Security Services: Amira Hana, Playground Assistant, Melinda Heights Elementary School, Saddleback Valley Unified School District

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- Skilled Trades: Karin Vizcaino, Skilled Maintenance - Electrician, Los Alamitos Unified School District
- Technical Services: Manjit Kaur Charaia, Senior Programmer Analyst, Garden Grove Unified School District
- Transportation Services: Eddie Vey, School Bus Driver, Ocean View School District

From working with our most vulnerable populations to providing students with nutritious meals, these outstanding professionals are rightly considered the best of the best based on their work performance, leadership, dedication and involvement with their schools and communities.

As county superintendent, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate and commend the 2023 Orange County Classified Employees of the Year. At the same time, allow me to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to all our classified school employees for their commitment, compassion, creativity and character.

Your work is seen, your contributions are valued, and your actions are essential to creating safe, nurturing and inspiring learning environments for all of our students.

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Ask Dr. Shari



Dr. Shari Sweetnam

Good for the Mind & Great for the Heart

The way we choose to spend our time and the activities in which we engage help form our value system. With a wide array of possibilities and opportunities, volunteering is a positive and vastly beneficial way of helping young people develop a strong sense of self.

Volunteering offers benefits spanning from the intellectual and spiritual to the educational and professional. As young people give of themselves and their time, they can learn about being selfless. In a busy world of “pursuit of personal happiness,” too often the intrinsic values of empathy and giving are the lessons that are overlooked. Helping others via a structured volunteer program is a positive and safe way to develop oneself in this regard.

As Mahatma Gandhi said, “The best way to find yourself, is to lose yourself in the service of others.” Teens who experience growth at an early age are likely to continue cultivating positive behavior and friendships.

Motivational Speaker, Founder of *The Brainpower Programs for Schools*, Author, Consultant, Radio Host contact: info@doctorshari.com, twitter: DrShariS, Youtube: Dr. ShariS, LinkedIN: Dr. Shari Sweetnam



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Parent To Parent



Jodie Lynn

Activities Away from Technology

Q. My 10-year-old son only wants to stay indoors, play video games and eat chips and the like. He doesn't like sports. I'm trying to get him outdoors and moving but he complains about the heat. Any ideas on how to get him away from the TV?

A. There are plenty of programs that your son might like such as swimming, drawing, painting, camping, making pottery, volunteering at a pet shelter, cooking, graphic design for kids, etc. The whole idea is to get him into a scheduled activity three to five days a week. Some of the facilities where the activities take place have lunch served to the kids. It's usually a pretty healthy one at that. They should give you a weekly copy of them. If not, ask for one. Some programs allow kids to bring their lunch. This means that he will be eating less of the bad things and more of the good. He might even decide that eating fruit is a good break from chips. If your son can find something he likes and can participate in it with a friend, he'll be more willing to stick with it, especially if there's no pressure to be a super star.

Jodie Lynn is an award winning, internationally syndicated family/health and education columnist and best selling author. www.ParentToParent.com

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Human Resources

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Dr. Darvin Jackson
Assistant
Superintendent

Announcing Our Newest Member

Please join us in congratulating and welcoming the following newest member of our HR Team:

Leah Connolly has joined HR as a Technician II supporting our secondary certificated employees. Leah began her career as a Veterinary Technician for twelve years with various hospitals. Leah worked as an Accounts Receivable Representative for five years at Physicians Resources, LTD and as an Appeals & Grievance Representative at Humana for one year. Last year, Leah came to SVUSD to serve as an Instructional Assistant, IBI at Melinda Heights. We look forward to having Leah serve our secondary certificated staff.

SVUSD continues its efforts to recognize the dedication of its employees during the month of May. The Board of

Education adopted two resolutions at the April Board meeting to recognize the vital roles of teachers and classified staff. May 10, 2023 was designated by the California State Legislature as the Day of the Teacher. A heartfelt thank you to all teachers who show up on a daily basis to enrich, touch and change the lives of all students.

May 21-27, 2023 was designated as Classified School Employee Week. On April 27, Executive Cabinet members and CSEA President Chris Felde took the opportunity to travel to each site for those who were selected as the Classified Employee of the Year to personally recognize them for their contributions to our students and community. In addition to those selected as Classified Employees of the year, SVUSD would like to take this opportunity to thank classified staff for being there for our students and contributing to a warm, welcoming and positive learning environment. We know all efforts could not be accomplished without your contributions.

Cielo Vista *Elementary School*

21811 Avenida de Los Fundadores, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 • 949/589-7456 • www.svUSD.org/cielovista



Dr. Frances Hansell
Principal

Classified Employee of the Year

Michelle Osborn is a beloved playground assistant at Cielo Vista. We are proud to recognize her. Michelle shared, "It's safe to say I love my job because I'm secretly a child at heart. Many years as

a playground assistant have had me witness naive, and curious children who grow into confident, independent-thinking tweens. Working with young minds is such a gift and brings me unmeasured joy!



With TK and Kindergarten, I'm surrounded by kids who crave belonging and friendship as well as a desire to do good. On our playground we are learning to play safe, be kind neighbors, talk about frustrations and own our choices. It's my mission to make every child feel special because they may not remember what you say, but they will remember how you made them feel." Congrats Michelle and thank you!

In a world when you can be anything, be kind.

de Portola *Elementary School*

27031 Preciados Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/586-5830 • www.svusd.org/deportola



Brendon Morrow
Principal

Our School Turned 50!

De Portola recently celebrated its diamond anniversary with a week full of festivities culminating in a ceremony to honor

Patriots both past and present. District and civic leadership joined our student-led assembly with guest speakers, poets, singers and even the MVHS pep squad to commemorate this noteworthy occasion in our school's history. Later, about 500 families joined together in a community picnic later in the afternoon, with many connections being

strengthened and new relationships being formed. Happy Birthday de Portola... here's to 50 more years!



Del Cerro *Elementary School*

24382 Regina St., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/830-5430 • www.svusd.org/delcerro



Kristin Thomsen
Principal

Lunch with a Loved One

Del Cerro friends and families had the opportunity to join their children for lunch recently. This bi-annual event, called "Lunch with a Loved One," has quickly become a cherished tradition that allows students to share lunch with someone who is important to them.

The event also provided an opportunity for families to connect with the school community. Many guests commented on how

impressed they were with the school's facilities and the friendly, welcoming atmosphere.

The event also had a positive impact on the students themselves. Research has shown that eating meals with family and loved ones can improve mental health and academic performance, and this event allowed students to experience those benefits firsthand.

Overall, "Lunch with a Loved One" was a resounding success. We are grateful for the support of our families and community and look forward to continuing this tradition for years to come.



Del Lago *Elementary School*

27181 Entidad, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/855-1125 • www.svUSD.org/dellago



Jonathan Kaplan
Principal

Two Celebrations

Spring at Del Lago has two celebrations – beautification and our Classified Employee of the Year! Our student leadership team, the WAVE, under the guidance of Mrs. Annamarie Bishop, installed letters spelling out “Del Lago Dolphins” and created two leaping dolphins in one of our parking lot fence areas. It

is stunning! Also stunning is our Classified Employee of the year, Mrs. Agnes Kanaan. She is one amazing Multilingual Learner Instructional Assistant! She is so kind and gentle with all of our students that they all want to work with her. Mrs. K loves languages – she knows several conversationally and is now working on Hebrew. Getting students to read is her greatest joy. Hearing a student read for the first time and the smiles that are generated – best gift ever!



El Toro *High School*

25255 Toledo Way, Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/586-6333 • www.svUSD.org/eths



Dr. James Martin
Principal

El Toro's AP Capstone Program is Thriving!

ETHS remains at the top in both AP Exam participation rate and pass rate: over 31% of our students are taking an AP exam this year, and we hope to top last year's pass rate at 80%! The ETHS class of 2023 will include 81 Capstone Diploma candidates!

El Toro High School is home to SVUSD's only AP Capstone Diploma program, which is an innovative program that allows students to engage in rigorous college-level study of the critical skills necessary for success in college. In addition to their other AP classes and exams, Capstone diploma candidates take AP Seminar in 11th grade and AP Research in 12th grade. AP Seminar provides sustained practice of investigating issues from

multiple perspectives and cultivates student writing abilities so they can craft, communicate, and defend evidence-based arguments. Students are empowered to collect and analyze information with accuracy and precision and are assessed through a team project and presentation, an individual written essay and presentation, and a written exam. In AP Research, students develop the skills and discipline necessary to conduct independent research to produce and defend a scholarly academic thesis. This second course in the AP Capstone experience allows students to explore deeply an academic topic, problem, or issue of individual interest and through this inquiry, students design, plan, and conduct a year-long mentored, research-based investigation. The course culminates in an academic thesis paper of approximately 5,000 words and a presentation, performance, or exhibition with an oral defense.

Esperanza *Special Education*

25121 Pradera Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/830-5470 • www.svusd.org/esperanza



Raymund Bueche
Principal

50 Years of Excellence

We are thrilled to share that our recent Pancake Breakfast, held on May 7th, 2023, was an incredible success! The event brought together students, families, and community members for a morning of delicious food and fun. We celebrated the school's 50th birthday at this year's event.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our staff and volunteers, the Pancake Breakfast was an excellent opportunity for everyone to come together and celebrate the achievements of our students and raise funds to support our programs and initiatives. Over the years, this school has seen many different purposes designed to help students successfully transition from their school years to adulthood. The current

program includes various services and resources, such as vocational training, life skills instruction, and individualized transition plans to ensure that each student is equipped with the tools they need to achieve their goals and thrive in the next chapter of their lives. We also recognize the importance of involving families in the educational process.

Finally, we are proud of our exceptional staff, dedicated to providing our students with the highest quality education and support. Our team of experienced educators and support staff work collaboratively to create a positive and nurturing learning environment that meets the unique needs of each student. Through ongoing professional development and a commitment to excellence, our staff is at the heart of everything we do at Esperanza Education Center.

Here's to 50 years of excellence and many more to come!

Foothill Ranch *Elementary School*

1 Torino Dr., Foothill Ranch, CA 92610 • 949/470-4885 • www.svusd.org/foothillranch



Deborah Shaver
Principal

Musical Performances at Foothill Ranch

Foothill Ranch was proud to showcase musical performances for grades K-6. All students have participated in music class all school year long and recently had the opportunity to share

their talents with family and friends. Performances included singing, small and large musical ensemble performing, and playing musical instruments such as boomwhackers, violins, trumpets, and clarinets. Our Bobcats rocked their performances! Bringing these performances to FRE was no small feat. The MPR was closed after weeks and weeks of rain. School administration, custodial staff, the office manager, and the District team worked together to ensure we had a space to host performances.

We deeply appreciate the music teachers and team at FRE who made this event possible! We look forward to continuing the tradition next year and showcasing our students' musical skills and growth with families, friends, and the community!



Gates *Dual Language Immersion Elementary School*

23882 Landisview Ave., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/837-2260 • www.svusd.org/gates



Diana Clearwater
Principal

2nd Annual Children's Day Festival

On Friday April 28th, Gates Dual Language Immersion Elementary School was excited to host the 2nd annual Children's Day Festival which celebrates El Día De Los Niños. The event was planned and organized by the Dual Language Immersion parent group Advocates for Language Learning (A.L.L.). The huge community event with about 1,000 attendees celebrated the day with traditional food, a piñata for every classroom, traditional latino folk dances by students from the DLI Transitional Kindergarten program and other students, and special guest dancers "Los Chinelos de Morelos." Many community organizations had booths set up to provide information and support to families. Gates was especially honored to have the Consul of Mexico, Dr. Audrey Rivera Gómez in attendance. We are so grateful for the amazing parents who support the Dual Language Immersion program from TK-12th grade!



Glen Yermo *Elementary School*

26400 Trabuco Rd., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/586-6766 • www.svusd.org/glenyermo



Jennifer Televik
Principal

Run & Roll

This spring, our PTA hosted our annual Run & Roll jog-a-thon event. Our students ran, walked, and rolled around our field, while students, parents, and staff cheered them on. The Run & Roll serves as our PTA's primary fundraiser of the year, while also providing a fun and inclusive event for our students of all abilities. We'd love to thank our amazing PTA and parent volunteers for hosting the event and providing visors for students to show their grade level spirit and stay cool in the sun. We would also love to congratulate our Glen Yermo Teacher of the Year, Ms. Susan Ernsbarger, who is pictured with her class at the Run & Roll.



La Madera *Elementary School*

25350 Serrano Rd., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/770-1415 • www.svusd.org/lamadera



Jennifer Gass
Principal

Volunteers Making a Difference

At La Madera, volunteers make a valuable contribution to our school each year. Their dedication, passion and hard work make a difference. This year, PTA organized family events such as the Back-to-School Glow Dance, Trunk or Treat, the International Fair, and Lunch on the Lawn with a Loved One. Funds earned during our annual Jog-a-thon were used to pay for field trips, update our campus, and provide grants to teachers. PTA also supported school programs such as Art Masters, Imagination Machine assemblies, Pure Game Recess support, and provided student and parent education about Cyber Safety. All of their work has enriched the educational experience of our students and has helped to make our school a welcoming and supportive community. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to each and every volunteer for their time, energy and enthusiasm. The countless hours spent volunteering have not gone unnoticed.



La Paz *Intermediate School*

25151 Pradera Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/830-1720 • www.svusd.org/lapaz



Tiffany Harville
Principal

Engaging and Connecting

Our Leopards have done an excellent job this year engaging and connecting with one another. We had our 10th annual International Festival where students, families and staff came together to celebrate diversity. Both our La Paz choir and band performed songs from various areas. Students signed up to represent a country and designed booths that displayed all the fabulous things each country has to offer. There was food, entertainment and fun that was had by all. Most importantly our students were able to learn from one another and see how our strengths truly do lie in our differences. At La Paz, we value all cultures and truly believe that each of us has something positive to contribute. This year our students and staff continue to take the time to learn more about one another. This is one of the many things that makes La Paz a “pawsitive” place to be.



Laguna Hills *High School*

25401 Paseo de Valencia, Laguna Hills, CA 92653 • 949/770-5447 • www.svusd.org/lhhs



Bill Hinds
Principal

An Eventful Year

It has been a busy and eventful year at Laguna Hills High School. Although we are not at the finish line quite yet, we wanted to recap some highlights from the 2022-23 school year.

On the academic front, LHHS is in the heat of the testing season. Our juniors just wrapped a very successful state-testing window with record-high completion rates.

LHHS also successfully reclassified 47 Multi-Language Learners, which also marks a record high for the school. Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate testing are also underway, and the Hawks look to continue their record of excellence on these exams.

On the athletic front, our spring sports programs have finished up another exciting season with multiple all-league hopefuls from every sport. Baseball qualified for the CIF playoffs. Track and Field had many top finishers and are sending multiple athletes to compete in Division 3 prelims, including long-distance, high jump, pole vault, and the 4 by 100 relay. Finally, on May 12th, the Varsity football team received their state championship rings to conclude their banner season.

On the visual and performing arts front, the spring production of *Fiddler on the Roof* concluded with massive accolades including a Spirit of the Macy's best male performer nod for lead Nick Fuller. The LHHS winter drumline and the color guard took the championship for their division to cap off a stellar year for our performing arts programs.

Great job, Hawks!

Lake Forest *Elementary School*

21801 Pittsford Dr., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/830-9945 • www.svusd.org/lakeforest



Audra Bailey
Principal

What an Amazing Year!

As we start to wrap up the year, we look back to realize what an amazing year it has been. We started the year with a Clap-In to welcome all of our families back to campus.

Families and students entered the school through balloons and all of their teachers lined up, clapping them back to school

with music. Families were able to see their students' classrooms and meet their teachers at Back to School Night. Our wonderful PTO hosted an ice cream social, where students were able to hang out with their friends and families got to know one another. The year was filled with learning, field trips, plays and so much more. In March, our families came to the Showcase, where grade levels showcased fun activities students did in their grade level. Fifth grade displayed their 3-D buildings created on a 3-D printer, along with poems about the buildings. Fourth grade challenged their families to a STEM activity along with other grades showcasing science experiments and phonics and math games. We finished the year off with a Mindful May Fair, Family Movie Night, Sixth Grade Promotion and our Final Clap Out. It has been such a wonderful year and we can't wait to see what next year has in store for our families.



La Tierra *Early Childhood Center*

24150 Lindley St., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/707-5276 • www.svusd.org/schools/elementary-a-l/la-tierra-early-childhood-center



Emily Arias
Principal

Outstanding Staff

La Tierra supports over 200 preschool students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP), as well as houses two Preschool Connections classes and Best Buddies class. The staff at La Tierra includes Teachers, Psychologist, Instructional Assistants, Instructional Assistant Leads, Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapist, Office Manager, Community Liaison, Plant Foreman, Health Office Aide, Food

Services Assistant, and District Coordinator. They have been amazing all year long as they continually collaborate with each other to make sure all student needs are met. They work tirelessly to help students achieve their goals and objectives outlined in their IEPs. This year we recognized two of our outstanding staff. Victoria Velez received the Teacher of the Year award and Kara La Fleur received the Classified Employee of the Year. Both of these women have demonstrated superior commitment and have gone the extra mile to support students and staff members. We are truly thankful to have such dedicated employees working on our preschool campus.



Linda Vista *Magnet Elementary School*

25222 Pericia Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/830-0970 • www.svusd.org/lindavista



Shannon Wyatt
Principal

6th Grade IB Exhibition

As a culminating activity of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme, students in 6th grade showcase work at Exhibition. It offers them a rewarding and challenging opportunity to showcase the attributes of the IB learner profile and celebrate their transition

from Primary to Secondary school. This year, students at Linda Vista are investigating climate change and its effects on animals. It has definitely been an eye-opening experience for our scholars. With climate change being one of the most significant global issues we face today, our scholars knew it was essential to investigate the consequences and the ways it affects animal's lives. Overall, students learned through this investigation the importance of taking care of the environment and the impact our actions have on the natural world. Exhibition took place on May 17th at our annual Showcase.



Lomarena *Elementary School*

25100 Earhart Rd., Laguna Hills, CA 92653 • 949/581-1370 • www.svUSD.org/lomarena



Grace Cruikshank
Principal

Congratulations Lourdes Trevino!

Lomarena is truly a welcoming and loving community filled with passionate educators and staff, generous and talented community members, and students that have a strong sense

of belonging and respect for each other. This year, we have the pleasure of celebrating a cherished member of our staff as the Classified Employee of the Year, Lourdes Trevino! When you enter our school office, you will see her smiling face and experience her joyful spirit. Her work ethic is unmatched. Lourdes demonstrates all of the values we cherish at our school. We are truly grateful for her contributions to our Lomarena Lion pride!



Los Alisos *Intermediate School*

25171 Los Lobos Way, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/830-9700 • www.svUSD.org/losalisos



Michael Marzilli
Principal

Earth Day

The Lobos were busy cleaning up and beautifying the Lobo Arboretum. Our students worked together to clean up our beautiful outdoor space used

for learning and contemplation. The arboretum is used and maintained by our science classes and features an outdoor learning center for students. This outdoor space provides students with a wealth of opportunities to experience interactions with nature and to learn about our environment. It is also situated next to our Wellness Center where students are encouraged to go out and relax in this tranquil space.



Melinda Heights *Elementary School*

21001 Rancho Trabuco, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 • 949/888-7311 • www.svusd.org/melindaheights



Kathryn Martin
Principal

Dedication and Hard Work

As we say our fond goodbyes to the 22-23 school year, Melinda Heights would like to highlight the entire school community for their dedication and hard work. Melinda Heights teachers put forth tireless efforts to educate our children and go above and beyond like no other; their commitment is appreciated by all. The Melinda Heights PTA has provided incomparable support and puts students and families first, always. Their love for Melinda Heights has made a significant impact on the lives of our students, and we could not accomplish what we do without their unwavering commitment. That is why the Melinda Heights PTA is the 4th District (Orange County) PTA Unit of the Year! The parents and students at Melinda Heights are the most integral part of our school community. Together, we have created a wonderful learning environment that fosters growth and success. Melinda Heights Mountain Lions and their families ROAR!



Mission Viejo *High School*

25025 Chrisanta Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/837-7722 • www.svusd.org/mvhs



Tricia Osborne
Principal

MVHS Best High School for Sports in CA!

Mission Viejo High School ranked #5 in a list of Best High Schools for sports in California! With thousands of schools in CA, we are proud to be at the top. This year, MVHS Varsity Teams achieved league titles in Football, Girls Soccer, Boys Volleyball, Boys Swim, and Girls Diving. Congrats to Diablo senior Alexis Unter who recently competed at the CIF Division 2 Swim & Dive Championships, and swam in the inaugural Unified heat for parathletes. She placed 2nd in finals! The athletic programs at MVHS connect student-athletes on a deeper level with their peers, coaches, staff, and community members. Diablos represent MVHS with pride and our programs compete with a drive to win. Twenty-two seniors signed National

Letters of Intent to play in college. Opportunities to play sports are available to each and every student and we strongly encourage participation. Congratulations to all MVHS student-athletes for a successful year. Go Diablos!



Boys Swim CVAA Meet Champions/Co-League.

Montevideo *Elementary School*

24071 Carrillo Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/586-8050 • www.svUSD.org/montevideo



Lisa Graham
Principal

Thank You, Mrs. Friesen!

Tami Friesen sits at the hub of the school... our dedicated, beloved Office Manager! Colleagues enthusiastically share, "She is so organized and efficient... so knowledgeable in her job, supportive and patient. She also has a great sense of humor!" As a principal, it is a joy to see how

she pours her heart, soul, and creativity into her work. She looks for innovative procedures and systems to put in place. Whether it is preparing for an award ceremony, welcoming parent volunteers, scheduling Pacific Symphony Class Act assemblies, or adding a post on social media; she does it in support of our School Family. There isn't one person at Montevideo that doesn't value her work. We all agree, it is a privilege to work together with our committed colleague. Her passion, creativity, fun nature, and smiles are a gift. Montevideo proudly celebrates Tami Friesen as our Classified Employee of the Year!



Olivewood *Elementary School*

23391 Dune Mear Rd., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/837-6682 • www.svUSD.org/olivewood



Alex Perez
Principal

Olivewood's Classified Employee of the Year

Olivewood would like to give a huge congratulations to Mrs. Mary Lynne Cowan as our Classified Employee of the Year. Mrs. Cowan is always helpful and organized. She ensures that our students have the latest texts and materials.

Mary Lynne is helpful during library time with supporting students who are trying to find the book of their choice, or a similar one if their choice is checked out. She always picks an appropriate book to read aloud to the students and encourages them to be active participants. She hosts a terrific book fair every year for the students. Mrs. Cowan keeps our library up to date with new books and refreshes the popular books when they need to be replaced. She gives her time to help the students with their chrome books when it's needed. Mary Lynn Cowan is always smiling and willing to help staff and students right away.



Portola Hills *Elementary School*

19422 Saddleback Ranch Rd., Trabuco Canyon, CA 92679 • 949/459-9370 • www.svusd.org/portolahills



Ed MacNevin
Principal

Teacher of the Year

We are proud to recognize Mrs. Tescher as PHE's Teacher of the Year. We asked Mrs. Tescher to describe a little about herself, she shared "This is my 27th year of teaching, all at PHE. I have found that the most effective thing I can do for my students is to build a

strong community based on encouragement, empowerment, and clear expectations. This begins with helping them get to know themselves and each other as people and as learners. It also includes helping them to manage their thoughts and feelings, as well as fostering a growth mindset environment. By empowering them, there is a shift to an intrinsic motivation for students to show up as their best selves at school. They are invested, so this translates into fewer behavior problems, deeper and more effective learning, and more happiness in our classroom!" Way to go Mrs. Tescher!



Rancho Cañada *Elementary School*

21801 Winding Way, Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/786-5252 • www.svusd.org/ranchocanada



Jennifer Kajdasz
Principal

Lunch with a Loved One

Rancho Cañada hosted our first ever Lunch with a Loved One this Spring. This event allowed all our Eagles to invite anyone of their choosing to come find a spot on our campus and eat a lunch provided from home or they could pick up one up from food services. We had over 480 loved ones (parents, grandparents, siblings, friends and neighbors) come to eat and play with our students. Our lunch time sports program, Premiere Sports, was also on site with fun games set up to keep our Eagles busy. None of our Eagles ate alone as other families were inviting students to join them, and the principal, Mrs. Kajdasz, set up blankets too. The event was complete with picnic baskets, blankets, umbrellas and lots of smiling faces enjoying great weather and the sunshine. We look forward to making this an annual event!



Rancho Santa Margarita *Intermediate School*

21931 Alma Aldea, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 • 949/459-8253 • www.rsmintermediate.com



Tyler Morgan
Principal

Congratulations Ricky Duarte!

I am pleased to write about Ricky Duarte, our Classified Employee of the Year, who has demonstrated outstanding performance as an Instructional Assistant working with

Multilingual Learners. Ricky has been an invaluable asset to Rancho Santa Margarita and has significantly

impacted our students' academic achievement.

Ricky has created a welcoming and inclusive learning environment for all students. In addition, he has worked collaboratively with teachers, administrators, and parents to develop and implement effective strategies to support our MLs in their language development and academic progress.

Ricky's strong communication skills and cultural awareness have enabled him to build effective relationships with our MLs and their families, fostering

trust and mutual respect. In addition, he has gone above and beyond his job duties, often staying after hours to provide additional support and tutoring.

Ricky's contributions have impacted our school community, and we are grateful for his exceptional work.



Robinson *Elementary School*

21400 Lindsay Dr., Trabuco Canyon, CA 92679 • 949/589-2446 • www.svusd.org/robinson



Suzy McMasters
Principal

Congratulations Cathy!

Please help us congratulate Cathy Hanson, the Robinson and SVUSD Classified Employee of the Year! Cathy's love and compassion for each and every student she serves in our Special Education Foundational Program is evident everyday. Her calm

and patient demeanor helps create an environment where students feel safe, cared for, and supported as they learn and grow. Ms. Hanson supports our youngest scholars and ensures they have opportunities to engage in learning and play during the school day. She can often be found pulling our scholars in the wagon, playing with them on the playground and participating in Unified school activities. Cathy Hanson is a valued member of our Robinson Team and we are thrilled she is the SVUSD Classified Employee of the Year! Congratulations Cathy!



San Joaquin *Elementary School*

22182 Barbera, Laguna Hills, CA 92653 • 949/581-3450 • www.s/sanjoaquin



David Shun
Principal

Orange County Teacher of the Year

San Joaquin Elementary School is thrilled to celebrate Laura Blackie as a 2024 Orange County Teacher of the Year! Mrs. Blackie's passion for teaching shines through in a multitude of ways. Her lessons are engaging and support a variety of learners through numerous strategies and techniques. She's learned Spanish to help communicate and connect with students and parents, and as San Joaquin's Multilingual Learner

Coordinator, she helps support our students and staff with Multilingual topics that include reclassification. In addition, she provides our Multilingual families with informative presentations at our ELAC meetings. But, that's not all! She also strives to incorporate technology into her lessons and supports her students' use of technology across the curriculum. In fact, she coached a drone club where students coded drones to navigate an obstacle course autonomously. It's no wonder we are celebrating her as a Teacher of the Year!



Santiago *STEAM Magnet*

24982 Rivendell Dr., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/586-2820 • www.svUSD.org/santiago



Howard Johnston
Principal

Green Achiever

Santiago STEAM Magnet Elementary School has spent the last five years developing ways to achieve their mission of providing meaningful, innovative learning experiences for a

community of diverse learners who solve complex problems with creativity and confidence. But how do we know if we are getting there? One big way is when others recognize your efforts. Santiago has just been recognized in a big way. The State of California's Department of Education awarded Santiago as a 2023



Green Ribbon School "Green Achiever." Only five schools in all of California receive this designation each year. Santiago was also awarded the 2023 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School distinction. Santiago was only

one of 26 schools across the entire country to reach this achievement. In May, Santiago STEAM Magnet will host the State of California's Green Ribbon School Ceremony honoring all candidates. Students will share their accomplishments through a school-wide tour.

Serrano Intermediate School

24642 Jeronimo Rd., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/586-3221 • www.svusd.org/serrano



David Young
Principal

eCybermission

Serrano, led by STEAM science teacher, Mrs. Suter, led 23 teams into the eCybermission competition. This program is a web-based STEM competition (sponsored by Army Educational Outreach Program). Teams focused on identifying community problems and solving them using scientific inquiry or engineering processes. From these 23 teams, five earned First Place honors in California and were Western region finalists! Each student won a \$2,000 savings bond.

Algae Busters: What works best to eliminate blue-green Algae from swimming pools?

— Riley Capistran and Tayva Veal

Waves: Created a wave driven generator to power off shore technology. — Ben Chow and Lexie Nguyen

Little Fishees: Designed a water saving timer for your faucet.

— Maddy Herman, Emma Wang, and Jayla Chan and Arwa Abdrabou

BioVolt: Created a device that uses compost heat to generate electricity.

— Kara Montanez, Lucas Boyd and
— Aryssa Negahdauree

Optima Air: Created an air filter to clean the air from factory smokestacks.

— Lindsay Keith, Raksha Kaushik and
— Rachel Shin



Silverado High School

25632 Peter A. Hartman Way, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/586-8800 • www.svusd.org/silverado



David Gordon
Principal

SOARing to the End

Silverado Eagles are SOARing to the end of the school year. May is packed with “end of year” activities. The festivities began on May the 4th for Star Wars Day. Teacher Appreciation week started on May 8th with the theme of “Silverado Teachers Hit It Out Of The Park!” The Silverado staff thanked our teaching staff for all the work they do throughout the school year! We hosted a Career Day on May 10th.

We had speakers from eighteen different career fields on campus to inform students about career paths and opportunities ranging from Culinary Arts and Stunt Coordination to Auto Mechanics and Welders. May 12th was magical as we held our Enchanted Forest themed Prom. May 22nd kicks off Classified Staff Appreciation week with the theme “We are Wild for our Classified Staff.” Lastly, June 1st is the highlight of the year, as we expect to have 85 Silverado students become high school graduates!!

SVUSD *Virtual Academy K-12*

21001 Rancho Trabuco Rd., Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 • 949/580-3457 • www.svUSD.org/virtualacademy



Glenn Giokaris
Principal

Creating the Conditions for Learning

The staff at SVUSD Virtual Academy frequently discuss the necessary conditions to foster student learning in the era of AI, automation, and virtual realities. Research and practice demonstrate that students require a sense of autonomy, the ability to achieve learning objectives, and a sense of belonging to a community. A great example of how our teachers apply these concepts is the digital composition

unit created by English teachers Lisa Meyers and Lisbeth Welch-Stamos. This month-long project required all high school students to become screenwriters, directors, and editors to produce a digital composition that told their personal story. Through the process, not only did students learn the art of expression and narrative writing, but they were challenged and inspired to learn how to use technology and multimedia to communicate and engage an audience. The schoolwide project culminated with a film festival in which students presented their work.



Trabuco *Elementary School*

31052 Trabuco Canyon Rd., Trabuco Canyon, CA 92678 • 949/858-0343 • www.svUSD.org/trabuco



Dr. Lindsey Gatfield
Principal

STEAM Expo

Trabuco Elementary students have been busy designing STEM projects for SVUSD's STEAM Expo. Our second and third graders are creating Rube Goldberg machines

that shake and pour out a box of Nerds candy. The students engage in the engineering design process to create their machines. They began this work by learning about simple and complex machines and researching ideas. Once their planning phase has been completed, the students work together to create a prototype to test and revise. This month, students will compete to see which team will represent Trabuco Elementary in the Rube Goldberg competition at the STEAM Expo.



While second and third graders have been busy working on their Rube Goldberg machines, fourth, fifth, and sixth graders have been working on the Materials Challenge. They are using their creativity to innovate!

Good luck at the STEAM Expo, Trabuco Coyotes!

Trabuco Hills *High School*

27501 Mustang Run, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/768-1934 • www.svusd.org/thhs



Alicia Foulk
Principal

THHS Classified Employee of the Year

Juan has been the plant foreman at THHS for over 15 years. Juan leads a great staff to maintain a beautiful campus despite numerous challenges. He had to overcome pool construction, continually rescheduled A/C additions, rain issues, and staffing shortages. Despite this, you will never hear him say he's too busy to help with anything, whether it falls under his job duties or not.

Juan has a servant leader approach. He always has a smile on his face and is friendly to all students, staff, and visitors on campus. He is excellent at multitasking and always manages to take care of his job responsibilities no matter what obstacles he faces during any given day. He is a pleasure to work with and is an absolutely essential part of the Mustang Family! His flexibility and kindness deserve mention each year because this school is buttressed by his effort and leadership.



Trabuco Mesa *Elementary School*

21301 Ave de las Flores, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 • 949/858-3339 • www.svusd.org/trabucomesa



Caryn McGrew
Principal

Congratulations to Trabuco Mesa's Teachers of the Year!

Kaitlin Anderson has been one of our Education Specialists for the past four years. She knew she wanted to be a special education teacher when she joined the Best Buddies club her freshman year of high school. Kaitlin loves teaching because she is able to be a positive and consistent influence in the lives of the students with whom she works.

Bailey Russo has been teaching for the past four years, two years in 5th grade and two years in 6th grade. Supporting her students as they form friendships, create memories, make connections, and learn new things are the most fulfilling parts of her job. Each and every one of Bailey's students have helped her become the teacher she is today.

Congratulations Mrs. Russo and Miss Anderson! We are so thankful to have you on our Bulldog Staff!



Valencia Elementary School

25661 Paseo de Valencia, Laguna Hills, CA 92653 • 949/830-3650 • www.svusd.org/valencia



Carolyn Fries
Principal

Congratulations Shannon and Toni!

We are proud to introduce you to our Teacher of the Year, Shannon Craycraft and our Classified Employee of the Year, Toni Cuffari!

Mrs. Craycraft started her career at Valencia years ago and after some time away to raise three kids, she returned to us in 2018. She is passionate about developing relationships with students and connecting with their families in her third grade class. In her own words, "I have known since third grade that I wanted to be a teacher and honestly could not imagine doing anything else!"

Mrs. Cuffari is our amazing office manager! She started working in SVUSD in 2014 as an office clerk and came to Valencia in 2019. She is passionate about her job and loves to serve staff, students, and families. She says, "I love that my job touches so many and allows me to get to know many other wonderful SVUSD employees!"



Day at the Beach –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 SVUSD in the subject line.

Entries must be received by July 15, 2023

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

Thank you Barkate / Nehi Orthodontics for sponsoring our contests!

www.BarkateNehiSmiles.com

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|------------|---------------|
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| UMBRELLA | SHORTS |
| HAT | CHAP STICK |
| FLIP FLOPS | FIRST AID KIT |
| PAIL | COOLER |
| SHOVEL | DRINKS |
| BLANKET | SNACKS |
| BOOK | |



Congratulations to **Darlene Melgarejo**
Winner of our April Word Search Contest!



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