

# School News

*Education + Communication = A Better Nation*

**Covering the Los Alamitos Unified School District**



Volume 20, Issue 101

June 2023

## Celebrating the End of a Wonderful 2022-23 School Year!



**Los Alamitos High School athletes and special education students from across the district gathered for the annual "Griffriends" event.**





## Our Injury Prevention Team Encourages Proper Car Safety to Keep Kids Safe

By: Jennifer Rodriguez, coordinator, Injury Prevention Program, MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach

Car accidents can be devastating but by taking the appropriate precautions, you can help prevent injury and death.

Using the appropriate car seat for your child's age, height, and weight is crucial. California law requires infants to be rear-facing until they are 2 years old or have reached the seat's maximum height and weight limit. At that point, children will transition to a forward-facing car seat. Next, children will transition to a booster seat. Children age 8 or older or 4'9 or taller, may use the vehicle seat belt as long as it fits properly.

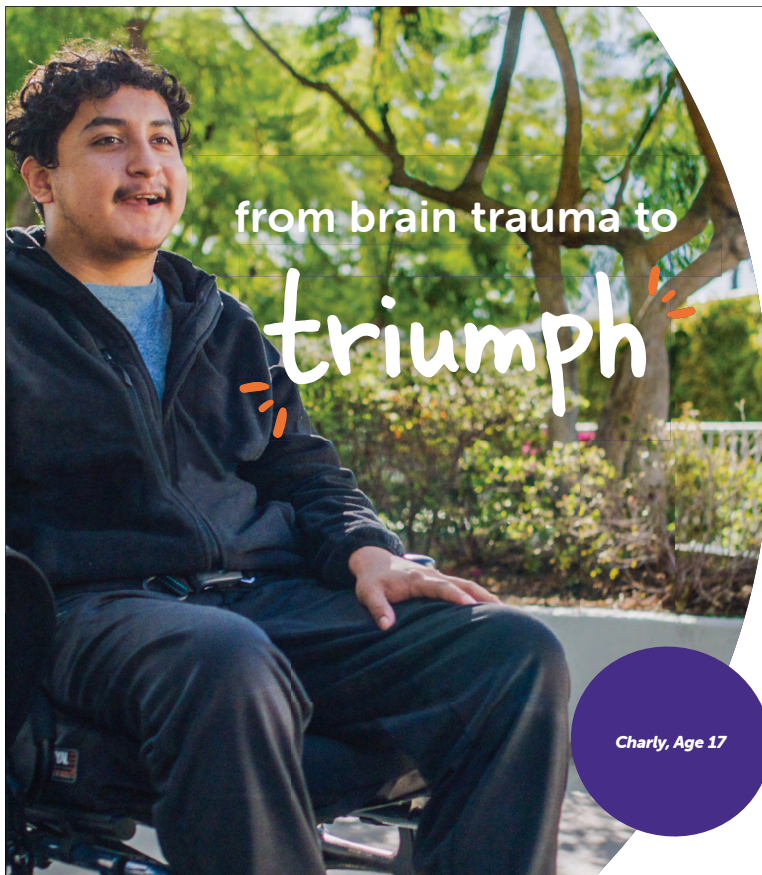
Having the car seat properly installed is also critical in maximizing safety. When installing the seat, make sure it is tightly secured and doesn't wobble or move more than an inch in any direction.

Emphasize the importance of seat belts to children as soon as they are old enough to understand. Make it a rule for everyone in the car to buckle up, every time — no exceptions.

Parents can lead by example by making sure you buckle up as well. Seat belts are the most effective way to protect against serious injuries in a car.

The Injury Prevention Program at MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach focuses on providing safety education to prevent injury. Dedicated injury prevention coordinators offer bicycle, pedestrian and car seat safety, infant CPR classes, as well as certified bicycle and skateboard helmets for children in need. The Injury Prevention Program team attends community events throughout Los Angeles and Orange Counties regularly, so that they can educate children and their families on how to stay safe and avoid hospitalization.

For more information on how to keep your child safe in the car, visit [millerchildrens.org/injuryprevention](http://millerchildrens.org/injuryprevention).



Charly, Age 17



### It takes a village.

Charly suffered a fall while biking — a severe brain trauma that threatened his life. Until Miller Children's & Women's Hospital helped his brain heal. Our therapists helped him walk and talk again and our highly specialized pediatric team dedicated themselves to his recovery. Because we knew, to lift Charly back up again, it would take a village. So when we watched Charly walk the stage at high school graduation — supported by his physical therapist — we knew he'd only keep going.

Learn more.

[millerchildrens.org/care](http://millerchildrens.org/care)

Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach  
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South Bay to Orange County

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## Honoring the Longevity, Dedication, and Service of Los Alamitos Unified Staff



**Dr. Andrew Pulver**  
Superintendent

Los Alamitos Unified is proud of the significant contribution our staff members make to the education of our students. We take great pleasure in acknowledging the hard work, dedication, and support that our exceptional staff provides to our community. Our teachers work tirelessly to inspire and educate our children, while our classified staff keeps our schools running smoothly behind the scenes. Our support staff and administrators provide endless assistance, mentorship, and leadership, with each member of our Los Al USD family playing a crucial role in shaping the future of our students.

Therefore, we are thrilled to continue our long-standing tradition of honoring our staff members for their loyalty,



dedication, and service to the District with the presentation of “Longevity Pins.” This annual ceremony is held at every school, district office, and auxiliary site to pay tribute to school district employees who have served for 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30+ years. Pins are awarded in five-year increments to deserving employees.

In addition to honoring our employees, this ceremony also provides a platform to showcase the district’s enduring culture of recognition and appreciation. The longevity of our employees is a testament to their commitment to education in our Los Al Unified community. These individuals have dedicated many years of their lives to this important work, and their impact on the district and the community cannot be overstated. We couldn’t be more proud to celebrate and honor our Los Al USD family.







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## Seal Beach Animal Care Center

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### Meet Bryce

*By Murlyn E. Burkes,  
Cat Committee Liaison*

Bryce is the sweetest dog with the most endearing face. When he arrived at the shelter, he had a pretty bad skin infection. But with treatment, his skin healed in no time. Bryce loves balls and will retrieve all day long. He wants so very much to be near you getting all the love he can soak up. He is ready for a home with someone who will offer him complete love.



A kindergarten class has the Seal Beach calendar on their white board monthly. This month it was a photo of Bryce. The teacher writes a different story each week for the entire month on the featured dog. The kids arrive to class and the first thing they do is read the story.



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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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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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FOUNDER/PUBLISHER: Kay Coop  
562/493-3193

ADVERTISING SALES: 562/493-3193

CONTENT COORDINATOR: Barbra Longiny

GRAPHIC DESIGNER/PRODUCTION:

Emily Ung and Mie Kawamura

COPY EDITORS: Kate Karp, Anna Zappia

SOCIAL MEDIA: Nancy Lueder

SCHOOL NEWS ROLL CALL, LLC  
P.O. Box 728, Seal Beach, CA 90740  
[www.schoolnewsrollcall.com](http://www.schoolnewsrollcall.com)

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# Hopkinson *Elementary*

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



**Jason Farvour**  
*Principal*

## Learning Beyond the Classroom!

Each year, Hopkinson Huskies in fourth grade have the opportunity to take their California history knowledge and apply it by traveling to San Francisco and Sacramento to explore firsthand the places and events they have learned about throughout the year. Beginning early in the morning, these Huskies, chaperones and the fourth-grade teacher team fly to San Francisco to learn

about the settlement of the town by early explorers, the native population cultures that existed before the arrival of European settlers, and the major transformations that the city underwent as a result of maritime expansion and the influx of settlers from the east as gold was discovered in the region.

Day 2 begins in Sacramento as the students explore the American River and life of a gold rush explorer. Panning for gold, learning from a mountain settler, and making some



tools for collecting their gold are all part of bringing their textbook learning to life for these California historians!

Later in the day, the fourth-graders visit the state

Capitol and learn about the impact of the railroad systems at the railroad museum in Old Town Sacramento. The whirlwind adventure is not only an exercise in social studies but also a chance for these Huskies to expand their sense of independence, exploration and travel! It is a great culminating activity that brings together their textbook learning in real-world scenarios and helps to develop an appreciation for their state, understand the experience of diverse peoples, and to better learn about the development of California. At the end of the trip, they can safely say, "Eureka!" which is the state motto, an exclamation of satisfaction when one has successfully made a discovery.







**Laura Trotter**  
Interim Principal

### Lee's Wonderful Garden

Lee Elementary has had an amazing garden for the last 10 years. It is an outdoor innovation area where hundreds of students have gained hands-on gardening experiences. We have even started a club called "Junior Master Gardeners" for our fourth- and fifth-graders.

All of this occurs at Lee because of the Orange County Master Gardeners who started volunteering at our school. These Master Gardeners volunteer each week to share their knowledge about gardening and teach our Jr. Master Gardeners how to instruct the younger students about the many things in the garden. Some of their knowledge is in the area of cultivating, horticulture, and pest management.

During the school year, students learn how to prepare the soil for planting, plant the seeds, grow the seedlings, water properly, study about bugs, pull weeds, and how to harvest. In addition, Lee students make their own compost, which is one of the reasons why their garden is so bountiful.

We also have a worm farm where we can learn all about the benefits of having worms in our garden. This year the garden was full of peppers, giant pumpkins, 10-foot-tall sunflowers, zucchini, Swiss chard, radishes, kale, broccoli, and carrots. We are so lucky to have our Jr. Master Gardeners assisting the Master Gardeners too. They are learning good leadership skills and responsibility.

Our student gardeners recently got to show off their gardening skills at our school's Open House event. They even made some beautiful succulent gardens for our families to take home. At Lee, we also encourage our students to use the garden as a peaceful place to visit, a place to read, or just a calming place to relax.

We are very thankful for all of the teachers and PTA members who continually support our garden. Their help and commitment is critical to making our garden always full of life, as well as a place for teaching our children how to be kind to the Earth.



**5th grade Jr. Master Gardeners giving support to our 2nd graders.**



**2nd and 3rd graders learn about composting.  
This compost is what makes our garden so beautiful.**



**4th Grade Jr. Master Gardeners teach the 2nd graders all about succulents.**



# Los Alamitos *Elementary*

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



**Gary Willems**  
*Principal*

## Class Act Family Night

Through LAE's partnership with Pacific Symphony's Class Act Program, our students have been learning about the composer, Johann Sebastian Bach as well as learning about an orchestra. This is a great program that really highlights the power of the orchestra to our students. We recently had our Class Act Family Night. This is where our families received a free concert from Pacific

Symphony musicians that highlighted each instrument and the amazing abilities of the performers. Our UTK- First grade students had members of the Pacific Symphony come to LAE and provide a concert for them. Our 2<sup>nd</sup> grade – 5<sup>th</sup> grade students went to the Segerstrom Center and saw the full orchestra perform. This is a great way for our school to teach our TIGERS about the symphony and expose them to a style of music they may not be exposed to otherwise. LAE looks forward to continuing this partnership with Class Act and the Pacific Symphony!





# Los Alamitos High School

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



**Christiana Kraus**  
Principal

## Valedictorian Celebration and Luncheon

On Wednesday, May 24th, Los Alamitos High School celebrated our Class of 2023 Valedictorians with the Valedictorian Celebration and Luncheon. The valedictorians were identified as the Top 10 graduating seniors in their class and announced at Senior Awards on May 18th. This year's graduating class was a very strong class academically, and are off to study at some of the best universities in the country. The Class of 2023 Valedictorians gathered in the gym to be honored in front of their peers, family members, teachers, counselors, and other school staff. Each student was given an opportunity to share a few words as they sat in a line in front of the Los Alamitos High School backdrop, similar to how many Los Alamitos High School student-athletes did earlier in the year for the NCAA official signing days. Students thanked those who helped them achieve their goals, discussed where and what they plan to study, and why they decided to pursue their

studies where they have. Students and attendees had an opportunity to pose for photos with each other. The afternoon concluded with an intimate luncheon in the College and Career Center, where the Valedictorians and their immediate guests were able to eat and be in each other's presence.

We are very proud of all of our graduates and hope to continue this tradition of honoring our valedictorians, more specifically, for their outstanding high school careers and achievements.

### 2023 Valedictorians

- Taylor Donato – University of California, Los Angeles
- Sean Kelman – University of California, Irvine
- Christopher Lavallee – Harvard University
- Soomin Lee – University of Pennsylvania
- Tina Li – Cornell University
- Aidan Pham – University of California, Los Angeles
- Allison Qu – University of California, Berkeley
- Sarah Saadeh – University of California, Berkeley
- Riley Yew – University of California, Los Angeles
- Nora Zajzon – University of California, San Diego





# McAuliffe *Middle School*

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



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

## 1st Annual Arts Festival

This May McAuliffe was proud to host our first annual Arts Festival featuring student performances from Vocal

and Instrumental Music and Dramatic Arts. The Festival also showcased student-created art from the McAuliffe Visual Arts Department as well as over 40 original student films for the McAuliffe Film Festival. Students and families were given the opportunity to see performances from all departments and celebrate in an evening that was truly focused on art!





# McGaugh *Elementary*

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



**Wendy Wood**  
*Principal*

## Pageantry

This year, McGaugh celebrated the 40th annual Pageant of the Arts. The production was absolutely magical. This year featured artist Wassily Kandinsky, where students in grades TK–5 played a part in the painting of the backdrop during the 2019–20 school year. We were not able to showcase the painting that year because of the shutdown, but we were excited to showcase it for the 40th annual Pageant of the Arts.

Original founders of the Pageant of the Arts, the mayor of Seal Beach, board members, previous McGaugh principals, community members and families were all in attendance. Mrs. Obert, who has been the pageant director since 2014, and many other current and retired McGaugh teachers put in countless hours of volunteer time for the production. The commitment demonstrated by Mrs. Obert and her team of dedicated teachers and volunteers begins with the selection of a featured artist, researching the history behind the art, presenting the masterpieces they have created, setting these works of art to music composed for this particular pageant, and choreographing dances worthy of these pieces.

A huge thank-you goes to Project SEEK and the families that donate and volunteer their time to fund the art program at McGaugh. This allows our Sea Lions an amazing opportunity to have weekly art classes taught by our art teacher, Ms. Anya, as well as Pageant of the Arts.





# Oak Middle School

10821 Oak St., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4740 • [oak.losal.org](http://oak.losal.org)



## Oak LOVES the Arts

We are very excited to have celebrated the arts at Oak the last two weeks. We had an instrumental music show, four drama performances, two choir shows and an art exhibition. We are so fortunate to part of a district that celebrates and provides these amazing experiences for students! The nights were filled with joy. It was a wonderful way to highlight students and our commitment to the arts. So much talent was present, we are so proud of our Lions!

**Evelyn Garcia**  
*Principal*





# Rossmoor *Elementary*

3272 Shakespeare Dr., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4520 • [rossmoor.losal.org](http://rossmoor.losal.org)



**Amy Coltey**  
*Principal*

## Day in the Life!

Each year our Friends of Rossmoor (FOR) parent group hosts a fun-filled Day in the Life event. This is a fundraiser that helps raise funds to support initiatives (such as STEM and our House System) on our campus. Students' parents can purchase tickets to enter a raffle if they want to participate. Our Knights eagerly wait to see if their names will be pulled for them to be the "Staff Member for a Day". A delicious breakfast was provided for our staff and students for a day as everyone started off their busy days. Our Custodian for a Day eagerly

walked campus with Mr. Josh as duties called throughout the day. Our Teachers for a Day were dressed to match their teachers as they assisted their teachers and taught throughout the day. Our office was quite busy as well with our Knights helping as School Nurse, School Office Coordinator and even Principal for a Day! FOR provided a delicious luncheon as well for our hard-working knights and staff members. What a fun day to experience as we get close to ending our school year. There were lots of memorable events that took place that our Knights will fondly remember. Our Principal for a Day, Zac Younger, shared with me, "I can't believe we walked a total of 21,355 steps!"





# Weaver *Elementary*

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



**Dr. Todd Schmidt**  
Principal

## Math Field Day

Recently, Weaver sent a team of fourth grade and a team of fifth grade students to the Orange County Mathematics Field Day. An all-day competition held at Capistrano Valley High School, Weaver students competed against teams from all over Orange County in a battle of wits...and smarts! The Math Field Day competition categories are: (1) Number and Operations;

(2) Algebraic Thinking; (3) Geometry; (4) Data Analysis; and (5) Measurement. The hard work and dedication paid off as both Weaver teams won medals in the competition: 4th grade took third in Algebraic Thinking and our 5th grade team took third in Geometry! Special thanks to our wonderful coach/teacher, Mrs. Freedman-Finch, and the our parent supporters who also helped coach and ensured that our students not only had the loudest cheering section, but had the snacks and drinks to sustain the mental output necessary for such a big day!





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