



Staff Bulletin

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News You Can Use

Getting to Know You



Margarita Bacigalupo-Diaz
Parent Academic Liaison,
Horton Elementary School

When veteran educator Margarita Bacigalupo-Diaz first stepped foot onto Horton Elementary as the school's new PAL, she faced several unknowns – Who were the parents of Horton students? What tools did they need to become more involved with their children's education? How could she bridge the gap between parent involvement and student achievement?

The answers came quickly. She made phone calls to as many parents as she could reach. Twenty of them came to her first "coffee talk" to voice their consensus. "Teach

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Family Friendly Schools Recognizing Service Excellence

For years, the district has had procedures for parents to express dissatisfaction with a teacher or staff member, but no formal way for them to say thanks.

That's changed.

Now, through the "Super Service Commendation" forms and drop-off boxes – on the front counter of most schools – parents have a way to let the district know when they've had an excellent encounter with their child's teacher, site staff members and principal. The boxes are the first – and most visible – part of the district's new Family Friendly Schools Initiative.

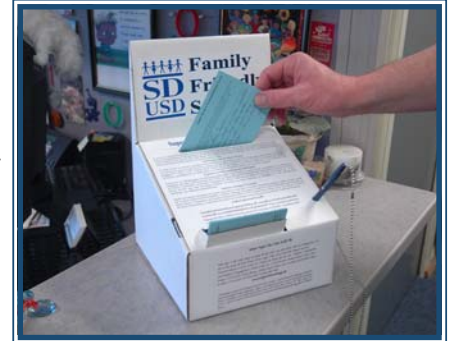
"We've had a process for complaints, but this is the first time we have a process for compli-

ments," said Edward Caballero, administrator of the Parent, Community and Student Engagement Office.

The commendation forms allow parents to nominate teachers, counselors, principals, custodians, support personnel and other staff members to receive special recognition from the district.

"We want to honor those school employees who go above and beyond the call of duty to provide friendly assistance to parents," said Superintendent Carl Cohn.

But the Family Friendly Schools Initiative is much more than just a way for parents to



reward outstanding service by teachers and staff. It's part of a larger effort to promote family engagement and improve school culture and climate. On behalf of its students, a Family Friendly School welcomes, honors and provides connections between families, the school staff and the community.

"When people come together and say 'we're going to do this for our kids,' lots of great things

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Becoming America's Best TRACE Named Model Educational Program

The Transition Resources Program for Adult Community Education (TRACE) has received a Leadership Award from the California Services for Technical Assistance and Training (CalSTAT). TRACE is one of only three educational programs statewide to be awarded for securing a successful transition into the world of education, work and adult life after high school for students with disabilities.

TRACE is the district special education transition program for adult students (ages 18-22) with disabilities who have exited high school without a



Members of the TRACE program, from left to right, include Colleen Harmon, Bob Morris, Judee Chambliss, Dale Talley, Shirley Hesche

diploma. It provides students with a seamless transition from public school to adult life. An Individualized Transition Plan is developed and implemented based on a student's interests and abilities. Board-adopted curriculum is used to develop

skills essential to participate in work, community and home settings.

"By receiving the CalSTAT Leadership Award, the state has recognized the district in providing innovative research based transition services to students with disabilities," said TRACE Program Manager Dr. Bob Morris. "This project provided us with an opportunity to showcase TRACE's expertise and experience in transition to the learning communities throughout the state of California."

For more information about the Leadership Site Award Program, go to www.calstat.org/leadershipSiteAward.html.



In Memoriam

Ruby Cremaschi, former Principal at Twain Jr.-Sr. High School, December 30, 2006.

Nancy Johnson, former Teacher at Foster Elementary, December 24, 2006.

Richard Kirk, former Teacher at Lincoln High School, December 1, 2006.

Marc Knapp, former Teacher at the Balboa Park Program, January 3, 2007.

Candelaria Lane, former Custodian at Hancock Elementary, January 27, 2007.

Dolores Simmons, former Teacher at Whitman Elementary, January 18, 2007.

Anna Strohte, former Teacher at Gage Elementary, January 13, 2007.

Classifieds

For Sale

Spa with Cover. Seats five. 31 jets. Two years new. \$4,500/obo. Call (619) 818-4761.

2000 Honda Odyssey LX. 94k miles. New transmission warranted by Honda. \$9,000/obo. Call Pauline at (858) 569-0181.

University of San Diego (USD) CLAD Credential Videos. Classes EDU 558Y, 558X and 547T. Call (858) 642-7673.

Electropedic Adjustable Twin Bed. Extra long 80", Luxury firm. Like new. \$500/obo. Call (858) 486-0080.

1997 Saturn SLD2. Great body/engine. 25-30mpg. \$1500. Call Theresa (619) 300-5575.

Whirlpool HD 9-cycle Washer and 6-cycle, 3 temp Gas Dryer. \$375/obo. Call (858) 569-6875.

2003 Yamaha V-Star M/C. Taupe/pearl. Lots of extras. Have photos. \$6000/obo. Call Paula at (619) 244-5070.

For Rent

North Park Condo. Lg. 2bd/2ba. Garage, Pergo floors, fp, w/d. 4446 Hamilton. Call (619) 276-6078.

Brand New House. Good location in 92116. All amenities. Central a/c. 2 garages. Call (619) 723-2198.

Coach K: Motivated for a Cause

Inspires Others



Every Wednesday at Taft Middle School, Robbie Klinefelter, known around campus as Coach K, makes the students run a mile. At 5'8" and 215 pounds, his students often question their coach's own ability to run a mile. He explains that running at school would interfere with his training. "For what?" the students ask incredulously, especially since Coach K is known for tall tales.

Unknown to some of his students, Coach K trains for endurance events to raise money for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS). He has completed 11 triathlons, four marathons and one century bike race - an

amazing accomplishment for anyone. In Coach K's case, it's miraculous. Diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia in 2000, he went through two years of chemotherapy and has been in remission for six years.

This year, Coach K has enlisted Taft Vice Principal Kimberly Meng (see photo) to join his arduous efforts to raise money for LLS. Asked why she puts herself through the physical torture

and time away from her family to train, Meng replies, "There are three students enrolled at Taft who are currently fighting against this dreadful disease and a teacher in remission. I found over time that my words of encouragement and support to them simply weren't enough. I had to do more to help."

Meng and Coach K will travel to Hawaii with 150 other members of Team In Training for the Lavaman Triathlon on April 1. The team will raise \$700,000 for LLS.

To learn more, visit www.teamtraining.org.



"Cookies with Carl" was held January 11 at Freese Elementary School. Here are the highlights of Dr. Cohn's conversation with employees.

I recently saw "Freedom Writers" and thought it was great. Did the movie depict the real Carl Cohn?

I liked Robert Wisdom's portrayal of me as a thoughtful and deliberative superintendent, which is pretty accurate. In real life, I'm trying to restore quiet determination as a legitimate leadership style. I encourage everyone to see the movie — not because of me, but because it's a wonderful story about the power of teachers. It's about Erin Gruwell, a young high school teacher and her struggles to teach inner city kids. Through classic literature and writing, she's able to capture the minds of her students and ignite a passion for learning. Her success didn't come easy. She faced much opposition from her teaching colleagues. At one point they actually sent me a letter asking me to rein her in. I, in turn, sent back a letter saying I really support what she's trying to do. I hope others will find inspiration in Erin's story and create their own inspiring stories of student achievement here in San Diego. The

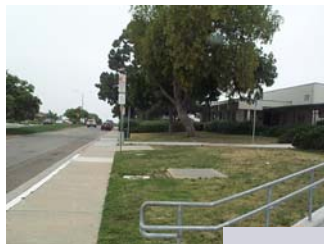
movie sends a powerful message that we should never give up on at-risk students.

There is a rumor that the district is being divided into five mini districts. Is this true?

The central office is not closing, if that's what you're asking. With the new area superintendent structure, my goal is to continue to shift away from top-down, central office management and put solutions closer to home. You will see each area superintendent move out of the Ed Center and relocate at a school site in their geographical area. These moves show parents, students and schools that we are committed to truly being a part of the community. Each area superintendent is empowered to be an advocate for his or her clustered schools. They make sure that the central office understands the unique needs of the schools and employees in their areas. In keeping with our goal to accelerate gains in student performance, they make sure that every school has a fully enriched and competitive curriculum -- one that recognizes the importance of the basics along with art, music and physical education. In addition, they will hold the schools in their areas accountable for expanding their partnerships with parents, community, business and higher education.

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Our Schools...



Hearst Elementary before and after the landscape makeover.



...as Jewels Hearst Elementary gets new grounds while Sherman Elementary breaks ground

Hearst Elementary School in the Del Cerro area recently received a landscape makeover. Besides 6,687 square feet of hybrid Bermuda grass, the school received more than 50 containers/flats of shrubs, flowering groundcover and ivy. The project was funded by Proposition MM.

Fourth- and fifth-graders from Normal Heights Elementary School sing the "Sherman School Song" during the groundbreaking ceremony for rebuilding Sherman Elementary School. The students are, from left, Heide Aleman, Vanessa Ochoa, Stephanie Deleon, Ashley Corral, Adeline Roman & Monica Calderon. All attended Sherman before it closed last year.



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us English and we will help to teach our kids." Three years later, her Parent Training sessions now average 30-40 parents daily. She has earned warm praise and heart-felt thank-yous from the families and colleagues whose lives have been touched by her dedication and passion for learning.

"Margarita's work has had a positive influence on every aspect of Horton Elementary, and has dramatically improved parent and community perceptions of our school," says Principal Robin McCullough. "Bottom line, children notice when their parents are involved, and this has a direct impact on their performance."

In this edition of *Staff Bulletin*, the Family Friendly Award-winning PAL shares her love for teaching and talks about the people who inspire her on a daily basis.

What inspired you to become a PAL?

I've been teaching for 26 years and have worked with ESL parents for a very long time. The constant thread they share is that they are very willing to help their children succeed, but are extremely limited due to language.

My (mostly Spanish-speaking) parents tell me they want to be their children's first teachers. I know I can do something to help them reach this goal.

What projects are you most proud of as a PAL?

At Horton, we've created a daily two-hour Parent Training session with a series of volunteer instructors and established a meeting with the principal every Monday. We specifically cover ESL, as well as writing, math, parenting skills, art, and more. The goal is to connect parents with what's happening in the classroom, and it's working. We create a happy, welcoming environment with food and music. We even offer daily childcare.

At our monthly Family Friday events, we do reading strategy and introduce a new learning topic. Recently, we did a multicultural art project with parents and their kids writing poetry together about diversity. We hold bilingual math competitions, spelling bees, and health and safety bingo games between parents and students, with fun prizes. I am most proud of the parents. They are generally low-income, stay-at-home parents

who now have an opportunity to better themselves, and also the lives of their children.

Can you give us an example of a recent student-parent breakthrough?

We have so many. In one case, a fifth grader was having some major behavior issues in the classroom. His mom asked me for help. Through parenting classes, coaching and encouragement, she has helped her son to control his anger and solve problems in a positive way. His teachers have reported a marked improvement in his attention span and self-control, which has definitely impacted his academic performance.

What are you most looking forward to now?

In the back of my mind, my main purpose is to improve academic scores. I'm always looking for ways for parents to participate in the classroom, with their own and other children, as well as at home. All our activities will continue to focus on this goal.

For information, call (619) 293-3181. ■

Hall of Fame

La Jolla High students, **Nicholas Pastor** and **Sebastian Ruf**, each scored a perfect 36 on the American College Testing (ACT) exam, which they took in October. The La Jolla students are two of only 75 students, out of some 475,000 nationwide, to receive a perfect score.



Teri Crago, (left) from the Dewey Elementary, and **Sharifa Abukar**, from Mt. Everest Academy, are the winner's of the district's Recycling Office contest for December. Each

received a Jamba Juice plastic mug with a coupon for a free smoothie, a \$10 gift certificate to Whole Foods, a Conservation Fund magnet and two coupons for a free burrito from Chipotle. Interested in participating in the contest? Contact Andrea Eaton at (858) 627-7414.

Ross Elementary Principal **Charlene Green** was selected the January 2007 Prize Principal by KyXy Radio and the Point Loma Nazarene University School of Education. Green received a commemorative plaque and a luncheon with her staff at Outback Steakhouse plus will be entered in a drawing for a summer vacation for two to Maui.

Thirteen year old **Krystal Leilua**, (right) a student at O'Farrell Community School, was among the authors recognized at San Diego's 41st Annual Local Author's Event. She co-authored the book, "Their Lives Our Stories," with O'Farrell teacher Ray Kinne. More than 100 O'Farrell students in seventh and eighth grade worked together to record the lives and stories of the residents of the Encanto neighborhood.



Three students representing Torrey Pines Elementary School recently won highest honors in this year's WordMasters Challenge, a national language arts competition. Fourth graders **Gavin Petilli** and **Emily Veliz** and fifth grader **Adam Hersko-Ronatas** all earned perfect scores in the year's first meet held in December.

Carson Elementary Principal **Anne Worrall** has been recognized for her professional excellence by ColorinColorado.org, an award-winning project that is part of the Reading Rockets initiative, which looks at how young children learn to read, why so many kids struggle and what can be done about it. Worrall is named in the "From the Heart - Achieving Excellence" feature and her profile is posted on ColorinColorado.org.

News you can use

Board Approves 8th Grade Retention/9th Grade Intervention Program

The Board of Education approved a new eighth grade retention program on January 23. The goal is to increase students' preparation for and successes in high school courses as well as reduce dropout rates. Eighth graders who fail two or more core subjects (English, math, history and science) will be retained in middle school and will not go on to high school in the fall. Parents can also choose an alternative to retention for a failing student. The student can be placed in a ninth grade intervention program, which will provide concentrated instruction in the core subjects as well as study skills.

Area Superintendents Move from Ed Center to School Sites

The five area superintendents are in the process of moving from the Ed Center to school sites in their areas. Here is an update on their progress:

- Area 1 Superintendent Carol Barry has moved to Correia Middle School.
- Area 2 Superintendent Chelsea Smith has moved to Encanto Elementary School and soon will open an office at Hage Elementary.
- Area 3 Superintendent Rich Cansdale is moving to Ross Elementary in early April.
- Area 4 Superintendent Vince Matthews is moving to Chollas Mead Elementary in the third week of March.
- Area 5 Superintendent Delfino Aleman is moving to Emerson-Bandini Elementary in the second week of March.

Watch for updates in upcoming *Newslines* as moves are completed.

Safety Tip

Advise all children to follow the safest paths, when walking to and from school. Walk in areas that are clearly visible to homeowners, housing complexes, other pedestrians and vehicle traffic. Always use crosswalks and pedestrian-controlled intersections.

- Provided by the School Police Crime Prevention Unit (CPU) at (619) 725-7013.

Carl's Cookie Jar

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What is the district doing to make sure parents feel welcome?

One of my five goals for the district is to strengthen parent, community, business and higher education support. The district recently launched the Family Friendly Schools Initiative to make sure that our schools are places where family members feel welcomed, informed and included. You may have seen the blue and white Family Friendly Schools commendation boxes and cards in your school office. The commendations give families and community members the chance to show their appreciation for high quality service from our staff members. We hope this type of recognition will increase the positive dialogue between parents and school

site staff members. Companies in our community, such as Sharp Healthcare, have started similar programs with great success. While other hospitals are seeing a decline in patients and empty hospital beds, Sharp has increased its market share. We hope to see that same positive response in our district, resulting in a boost in employee morale and enrollment.

Do you have a question for Dr. Cohn? Want to join the conversation with other employees? You're invited to attend the upcoming *Cookies with Carl*:

- **Tuesday, April 17**, from 4 to 6 p.m., at Oak Park Elementary School
- **Monday, May 21**, from 4 to 6 p.m. Location to be determined.■

Family Friendly Schools

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happen," said Dorothy Harper, associate superintendent, Parent, Community and Student Engagement Office.

Part of a nationwide movement to strengthen the connection between schools, their families and communities, San Diego Unified's effort is one of the largest undertaken. The program emphasizes six critical areas: school climate and customer service; effective communication and family outreach; parent involvement; adult learning; school decision making; and cultural competence.

Following a mid-February kickoff event, training is now available on how to fine-tune school operations to welcome families to our campuses. Beginning next January, participating schools can be certified as a Family Friendly School.

For more information on the program, contact Edward at ecaballero@sandi.net or (619) 725-5519.■

What People Say

"I'm inspired by the kinds of things that the high school folks have been able to do - really remarkable things. They've made significant advancement in the number of students who are on track to graduate. I think in a couple of years you're going to really see remarkable results on that and I'm very proud to just be a small part of that."

H.J. Green - Executive Director, Office of Secondary School Innovation, AASD management event

"What do we believe in? An area about children and our work, developing a vision for our work and how excited we are to have a mission. "Mission Impossible" principals - thank you for the good work that you do, and I applaud everything that you do at your schools."

Rich Cansdale - Area 3 Superintendent, AASD management event

"Our Area 1 parents and community members are committing their time and energy and their resources to our public schools. We're going to make sure all of the big employers know that we're available and a great place to send their children."

Carol Barry - Area 1 Superintendent, AASD management event

The Staff Bulletin is published by the Communications Department from the Office of the Superintendent of Schools. To receive this publication electronically, visit www.sandi.net.

Send all news items and classified ads to communications@sandi.net, Education Center, Room 2145 4100 Normal Street San Diego, CA 92103 or fax to (619) 725-5576.

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