



A Supplement from the...

Palm Springs Unified School District

Serving Cathedral City, Desert Hot Springs, Palm Desert, Palm Springs, Rancho Mirage & Thousand Palms

April/May 2018

Three District Teachers of Year Vying for County Honors

Two elementary and one middle school PSUSD teachers have been selected as this year's District Teachers of the Year and are now vying for Riverside County honors.

Bubbling Wells Elementary's Alicia Lind, Cielo Vista Charter's Doris Rodriguez and James Workman Middle School's David Zemek were chosen as District Teachers of the Year by a committee comprised of current and past District and County Teachers of the Year and a Palm Springs Teachers Association (PSTA) board member.

Lind, who began her teaching career in 1996 in San Diego, joined Palm Springs Unified in 1998 as a kindergarten teacher at Two Bunch Palms Elementary. She taught at Bubbling Wells



District Teacher of the Year Alicia Lind, back center, with Bubbling Wells administrators Assistant Principal Mark Acker, left and Principal Omar Tinoco, right, Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon and Lind's class.

for a year in 2006 and then for four years at Della Lindley before returning to Bubbling Wells in 2011. She current teaches fourth grade at Bubbling Wells. With a bachelor's degree from San Diego State University, Lind earned her teaching credential from National University and her master's in education from Chapman University.

"Mrs. Lind is a caring and optimistic not only teacher but human being as well," wrote one of Lind's former fifth grade students who is now in high school. "She is truly the type of teacher to make you not only want to be in class every day but feel a part of the class as well. She made me understand that I could be anyone I

want to be by taking time out of her day to make sure I was at my best and ready to seize the school day."

Rodriguez, who holds a bachelor's in liberal arts from Cal State San Bernardino and master's in education with a mathematics specialty from National University, began her teaching career at Sunny Sands Elementary in 2007. She has been a fourth grade teacher at Cielo Vista Charter since 2010.



District Teacher of the Year Doris Rodriguez, second from left, with, from left, Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon and Cielo Vista Charter Co-Principals Devlinn Clinton and Jennifer Geyer.

"She is a powerhouse of energy and positivity," wrote Rodriguez' colleague Julie Ramirez. "She is passionate about conceptual learning and tirelessly explains and re-explains best practices to those of us who are following her lead. Doris inspires and encourages me to be a better teacher, and I am a veteran of more than 30 years!"

Zemek, who began his teaching career as a science and math instructor at Nellie Coffman Middle School in 1989, joined the James Workman staff in 1995 and currently teaches eighth grade science. He holds a bachelor's of science from Western Michigan University and a masters in curriculum and instruction from Chapman University.



District Teacher of the Year David Zemek, left, with Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon and James Workman Principal Brad Sauer

"Mr. Zemek is persevering, deeply conscientious, professional and hard working," wrote James Workman Principal Brad Sauer. "He subscribes to a personal philosophy of pushing his students to do their own best and feel successful and motivated to succeed academically and personally. Dave is the consummate professional, who is an asset to our site, District and the teaching profession."

Four Riverside County District Teachers of the Year will be named County Teachers of the Year at the beginning of May and then move on to state competition. PSUSD teachers Dr. Brian McDaniel and Michelle Beyronneau were both named Riverside County Teachers of the Year for 2018. Beyronneau was named a state semi-finalist, and McDaniel was one of five California State Teachers of the Year and the state's nominee for National Teacher of the Year this year.

The selection committee chose the three District Teachers of the Year from site Teachers of the Year who have more than eight years of teaching experience and submitted applications. This year's other Site Teachers of the Year include:

Agua Caliente Elementary School	Jaclin Avon
Bella Vista Elementary School	Janet Finnegan-Kelly
Cabot Yerxa Elementary School	Tammy Hubler
Cahuilla Elementary School	Deborah Reef
Cathedral City Elementary School	Tracy Darrin
Della S. Lindley Elementary School	Colette Renker
Julius Corsini Elementary School	Sonia Reavis
Katherine Finchy Elementary School	Jennifer O'Connor
Landau Elementary School	Christina Alaniz
Rancho Mirage Elementary School	Brooke Hollinger
Rio Vista Elementary	Bill Manning
Sunny Sands Elementary School	Debby Duffy
Two Bunch Palms Elementary School	Sara Geurds
Vista del Monte Elementary School	Cristina Tostado
Cielo Vista Charter (Middle)	Jennifer Smith
Desert Springs Middle School	Antonio Mendoza
Nellie N. Coffman Middle School	Colleen Veal
Painted Hills Middle School	Jennifer Marruffo
Raymond Cree Middle School	Eduardo Contreras
Cathedral City High School	Mary Zwieg
Desert Hot Springs High School	Loret Stagg
Palm Springs High School	Svetlana Lazarova
Rancho Mirage High School	Kaitlin Giacalone
Alternative Education	Sean Pendergraph
Desert Learning Academy	Ioana Robles
Early Childhood Education	Jamie Flippen

District Office Has Moved

The Palm Springs Unified District Office has moved to its new location at 150 District Center Drive, Palm Springs. The new District Administration Center is adjacent to the District Service Center, which opened in 2012.

The new offices are located just off of Gene Autry Trail and north of Ramon Road on the east side of the street. No general fund monies or bond funds were spent on the construction. The

\$28 million project was funded by local redevelopment funds. The former district administrative office buildings on Tahquitz Canyon Way near the Palm Springs Convention Center are on leased land, and the buildings owned by PSUSD are up for sale.

The new mailing address is 150 District Center Drive, Palm Springs, 92264. The new central phone number is (760) 863-2700.

District Digest



Every Student Succeeding: Palm Springs Leadership Association (PSLA), comprised of PSUSD administrators and managers, recently hosted its annual Every Student Succeeding awards ceremony, which recognizes one student from each PSUSD school who have overcome challenges or obstacles to succeed in school. One high school awardee is selected by a PSLA committee to be submitted to Region XIX of the Association of School Administrators (ACSA) for consideration of an ACSA scholarship. This year's nominee was Cathedral City High senior Kevin Lopez, bottom, second from left, pictured with, from left, PSLA President Dr. James Feffer, Board of Education President James Williamson and Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon. At top, PSLA Board members and PSUSD Board of Education members with student honorees.



Assistance League Awards Nearly \$10,000 to High School Students: Through its Frank Moss Scholarship for the Arts program, Assistance League of Palm Springs Desert Area recently awarded 17 PSUSD high school students with scholarships totaling almost \$10,000 to take private lessons, purchase musical instruments, and buy art supplies. Scholarships are awarded based on financial need, passion for and desire to study the arts, and academic performance. Assistance League of Palm Springs Desert Area is one of 120 chapters of Assistance League, a national nonprofit organization that is transforming lives and strengthening community. The chapter also provides new school clothing to students in need, hygiene kits to students attending Growth and Development classes, backpacks to kindergartners, companionship to seniors living in

assisted care facilities, and assistance to military families at Twenty-nine Palms Marine Base. Pictured above are scholarship winners who were in attendance at a recent awards ceremony.



Cabot Yerxa Elementary Hosts Career Day: A total of 24 community business representatives visited second through fifth grade classrooms to share what they do at Cabot Yerxa Elementary's recent Second Annual Career Day, organized by the school's Student Council. Pictured above are most of the speakers and student organizers.

District Students Win Chalk Art Festival: Seven PSUSD students won top honors in the Palm Springs Sun-up Rotary Foundation's recent 8th Annual Palm Springs Chalk Art Festival. Raymond Cree MS 6th Grader Faith Garza, whose drawing is on the bottom, took first place in the middle school division. Cathedral City High sophomore Gabriela Marquez, whose drawing is on top, took first place in the high school division. Other PSUSD winners were Landau students Sofia Inda, Paloma Gutierrez and Isis Heredia, Katherine Finchy student Indi Chacon and Palm Springs High senior Kayla Mariner. The event, which drew about 2,000 visitors, raised \$7,000 for prize money and Rotary Foundation causes including: PSUSD arts education programs, Rotary Leadership Camps for students and the Shoes that Fit program.



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Editor: Joan L. Boiko • Phone: (760) 883-2701 • Email: jboiko@psusd.us • Website: www.psusd.us

Centralized Enrollment Center Open: Nearly 400 parents have registered their child for kindergarten through the Desert Hot Springs Centralized Enrollment Center since it opened for this year in February. The center, in collaboration with Borrego Health, is located at the Desert Hot Springs Health & Wellness Center at 11750 Cholla Drive, Desert Hot Springs, and is currently open on Wednesdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. through June 6 and will be open on Saturdays, April 28, May 19 and June 9 from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Required documents are birth certificate, proof of residency (utility bill), kindergarten physical dated on or after Feb. 8, 2018 and proof of immunizations. Free physicals and immunizations are available on site at the Borrego Health clinic. The Assistance League of Palm Springs Desert Area provided backpacks and books to the first 400 enrollees. Pictured, from left, are PSUSD Office Specialist Carmen Sanchez, Assistance League Members Susan Denning, Tina Regan and Jill Beighley and PSUSD Student Assistance Program Coordinator Don Slusser.



Top Weight Loss Winners: The Cathedral City High School's "Dangerous Curves" team emerged victorious in last fall's HealthyWage weight loss competition, placing fifth among 115 teams from school districts throughout the southwest and first among PSUSD's 110 participants. The team, comprised of Jose Ortega, Edith Van Horn, Lissette Cendejas, Raul Longoria and Rosalba Aguilera-Longoria; pictured with Board of Education members Richard Clapp and Madonna Gerrell; and Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon, right; lost 14.14 percent of their weight and received \$1,500 in the competition. They were recognized at PSUSD's recent "Recharge, Renew, Refresh" staff health festival.



Bubbling Wells Elementary Has New Garden: Several months of collaboration between Palm Springs Unified and the Desert Healthcare District/Foundation was recently commemorated with a ceremonial ribbon cutting marking Bubbling Well's Elementary School's first garden. The event was the culmination of a project that included designing, creating, building and funding the garden through a grant from Riverside University Health System (RUHS) -- secured by Desert Healthcare District and earmarked for plant-based health initiatives in Desert Hot Springs. About 25 students are part of the school's new Garden Club and have already planted citrus trees, tomatoes, mint, chilies, cilantro and other herbs. Plans are to fence the garden and have a local artist create a mural behind it.



PSUSD Teachers Honored as State Teachers of Year: Painted Hills Middle School Director of Music Dr. Brian McDaniel, left, center, and Desert Hot Springs High math teacher Michelle Beyronneau, right, left, were among the honorees at the recent California Teacher of the Year dinner in Sacramento. McDaniel is one of five 2018 California Teachers of the Year and the state's nominee for National Teacher of the Year; and Beyronneau was a semi-finalist in the state competition. Pictured with McDaniel are Riverside County Supt. of Schools Dr. Judy White, left, and PSUSD Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon. Pictured with Beyronneau is Jason Spencer, special advisor to State Supt. of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson.



DIGICOM Film Festival Set for May 17

DIGICOM will host its 10th annual film festival on Thursday, May 17 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Richards Center for the Arts. Themed “Rise and Shine,” the student and teacher film festival will include winning video submissions from all grade levels. The red-carpeted event also includes awards presentations for top film submissions as well as scholarships presented to top high school senior film producers.

Three elementary schools are also hosting their own DIGICOM festivals. For the first time, Bubbling Wells and Two Bunch Palms Elementary Schools in Desert Hot Springs are teaming together for the “Bubbling Bunch DIGICOM Elementary Film Festival” on Wednesday, May 23 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the theater at Desert Hot Springs High School. The event will include videos produced by students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Della Lindley Elementary in Thousand Palms



will host its Third Annual Elementary Film Festival on Wednesday, May 30 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the Helene Galen Theatre at Rancho Mirage High School, featuring the works of students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

The festivals come on the heels of DIGICOM's

third annual “It’s All About the Kids” fund-raising luncheon to support scholarships and classroom grants for equipment and extracurricular activities as well as DIGICOM after-school programs at middle and high schools. This year’s event honored local philanthropist Patty Newman. While the luncheon is DIGICOM’s official fund raiser, financial support for programs are solicited and awarded throughout the year from foundations, corporations, local organizations and community members to enhance District funding for teacher and student training, programs and awards provided by DIGICOM throughout the school year, intersessions and summer.

All DIGICOM film festivals are free and open to the public, and seating is first-come, first-served. For more information, visit digicomlearning.com or call (760) 537-0450.

Message from the Superintendent

Safety of Students and Staff Is Our Number One Priority



In light of the increased numbers of school shootings, tensions are understandably running high among the education community locally and across the state and nation. Following the horrific mass shooting at a Florida high school just two months ago, safety concerns are in the forefront of the minds and hearts of students, staff members and the community at large here at home and throughout the United States. Many of our District students and local residents – led by Palm Springs High School’s Associated Student Body (ASB) -- showed their concern and support for gun control measures and paid tribute to the students who lost their lives in Parkland at last month’s local march, which coincided with the national march in Washington D.C.

The safety of our students and staff members has, and always will be our number one priority. We all wish we could guarantee that there will never be any kind of violent act or incident on any of our school campuses. Unfortunately, no one can provide that kind of guarantee. What we can do – and are doing – is continuously work to modify, improve and enhance trainings and security measures so our campuses are as safe as possible and our staff and students are as prepared as possible to address a safety threat on their campuses.

New this year, PSUSD has partnered with Safe Kids Inc., a team of law enforcement and education experts, who have developed a curriculum that teaches threat response to our students in a non-threatening manner. During the past few months, all of our elementary teachers and some of our middle school teachers have received training on the H.E.R.O. program (Hide! Escape! Run! Overcome!), following parent information meetings. These teachers are now in the process of presenting their students with the safe-thinking skills and empowerment strategies they need through age-appropriate games, stories, classroom discussions, journaling and student-parent discussion. The remainder of our middle school, along with high school and early childhood education teachers, are being trained this spring.

In addition to this training, we continually remind our students of the resources available to them – as well as to our parents and community – to provide assistance should they see or hear anything they feel might be threatening or suspicious. It is crucial that any type of questionable behaviors seen or heard about be reported through a direct message or conversation with a trusted adult on campus or law enforcement rather than social media postings or texting to friends or relatives that can perpetuate unfound

rumors and create often needless panic. If you see or hear of something after hours or feel more comfortable reporting the incident or behavior anonymously, you can simply login to sprigeo.com and fill out a form which reaches district and school site administrators as soon as it is submitted. Reports are addressed as soon as they are received. The system can be used for perceived threats, bullying or other incidents that just don’t look or feel right.

SafeHouse of the Desert also has a 24-hour anonymous hotline and phone app for teens struggling with drug or alcohol abuse, depression, difficult family situations, bullying or other issues. The phone number (voice or text) is 844-294-0880 and the “What’s Up? SafeHouse” app is available through iTunes App Store or Google play.

We encourage our students and parents to voice their concerns related to safety or any other matter to a school or District staff member at any time. All shared concerns are taken seriously and addressed immediately in order to keep our school campuses as safe and healthy as humanly possible. Thank you for your continued support.

Sandra Lyon, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools