



What's Good in Education - Briefs December 10, 2008

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Hart District Educators Among Top Ten

Congratulations to teacher Fayanne Gabel from West Ranch High School, Counselor Leah Summers from Golden Valley High School and Principal Robin Geissler from Bowman High School, who have been selected as nominees for Outstanding Educator of the Year for Region 8 of the California League of High Schools. The league has selected some 10 top nominees, who will be honored at a dinner and awards ceremony on Thursday, Dec. 11, at the Woodland Hills Country Club. The final Educator of the Year will be presented that evening. The award is based on leadership characteristics and being a knowledgeable advocate of high school reform. The nomination also considers educators'

exemplary characteristics such as supporting powerful teaching and learning, accepting beyond-the-job responsibilities, acting as a role model and motivating students from diverse backgrounds. Region 8 will send one person to the state level, and then the California Teacher of the Year will be chosen. West Ranch teacher Sean O'Brien was the 2007 Region 8 winner and 2008 California League of High School's Educator of the Year.



Middle School League Honors Local Educators

Four Hart District teachers are being honored by the California League of Middle Schools for outstanding contributions to the education of California middle school students. Outstanding teachers include Gail Lanza, Rancho Pico; Jeanette Kratofil, Rio Norte; Joanne Johnson, Arroyo Seco; and Counselor Jody Liss-Monteleone, Placerita. Nominations are based on making a difference in the lives of students, providing rigor and relevance in a standards-based curriculum, and honoring diversity. Out of 10 nominees, one educator will be named as Educator of the Year for Region 8 and advance to state competition. Principals from each of the four schools will attend the presentation to salute their staff members.

Walker Achieves National Certification

Robert Walker, a social studies teacher at Academy of the Canyons middle college high school, has earned the title of National Board Certified teacher, a year-long process that involves detailed introspection of a teacher's methods and collaborative efforts, plus a rigorous six-part examination of subject matter expertise. As a social studies teacher, Walker had to demonstrate expertise in world and U.S. history, geography, economics and demography. The process is designed to make better teachers of the participants by having them critically analyze everything they do as a teacher. Walker came to the Hart District in 2004 at AOC, where he is now in his fifth year of teaching. The district now has 19 teachers who have earned National Board certification.



Rio Norte Spreads Diversity Message



Rio Norte Junior High Operation US seventh and eighth grade trainers have completed another successful year of Operation US diversity training with third grade students at Rio Norte's five feeder schools: Bridgeport, Helmers, Mountainview, North Park, and Tesoro. Rio Norte seventh and eighth graders deliver a message of acceptance and understanding by reinforcing the motto of the City of Santa Clarita: "Everyone matters in Santa Clarita!"

This year as in years past, the junior high schoolers worked with approximately 650 third grade students. Rio Norte students know they deliver an important message when they focus on getting along, no name calling, and treating everyone with dignity and respect.



Saugus Runners First in Nation



For the first time in program history, the Saugus Girls Cross Country Team was ranked number one in the nation according to Harrier Magazine editor Marc Bloom. The magazine is considered the foremost national authority on prep cross country and track. According to Coach Rene Paragas, it is a singular honor for Saugus to be at the top of the magazine's Fall 2008 super 25 rankings. The Saugus girls then cemented the title by sweeping their third straight

state CIF championship, with runner Kaylin Mahoney winning the state Division II Individual championship.



Canyon Library Hosts Authors



Canyon High School's library is more than a collection of books. The library also hosts speakers who encourage students to read and write. The October visitor was Cindy Schwanke, the pastry chef from college of the Canyons, who presented "Books with Bite." She connected students to the theme by talking about the importance of reading cookbooks and cooking magazines and even brought examples to share with students. In November, the library hosted author Gene Del Vecchio, who has written two fantasy books. He

spoke to students about how to become published and shared examples of rejection letters, copies of his books, and copies of contracts. His sense of humor was apparent and helped the students connect to his message.



Prizes Encourage Students to Read

West Ranch, Valencia and Golden Valley High School libraries are all focusing on the movie "Twilight," based on the book of the same name by Stephanie Myers. With extra "Twilight" books available, the libraries are using raffles, prizes and lots of fun activities to help students become more familiar with resources and materials available in the school libraries. West Ranch library is offering a free raffle ticket every time a student checks out a library book, based on a "Read and be a Winner" theme. Students can win a movie ticket gift certificate, "Twilight" posters, or the grand prize—a basket of "Twilight" goodies.

Reflections Winners on Display

Rio Norte recently honored the participants in the annual PTSA Reflections contest. Student entries in the areas of photography, art and literature were displayed. The program, established in 1969, has had more than 10 million participants. First place winners will move on to the council level and then possibly to district, state and national competitions. First place winner for literature was Juliete Chotel, first place winner for photography was Ina Chang, and first place winner for visual arts was Elena Rodriguez.



City Planner Visits Environmental Science Classes

Saugus High School's AP Environmental Science classes were the first to see the "hot off the press" plan for Canyon Country (a mixed-use development with a Town Center-type drive) when City Planner Darin Seegmiller visited their classes. Seegmiller discussed zoning difficulties, urban sprawl, and

environmental regulations: all concepts that are an integral part of the AP curriculum. Students were able to ask questions regarding the SCV General Plan and left with a better understanding of how the city attempts to meet the challenges of regional growth. AP Teacher Kristi Schertz arranged for the visit.



Golden Valley Presents 'Robin Hood'



Advanced students in the Play Production class at Golden Valley High School amused audiences with a comedic romp through Sherwood Forest with their recent production of "Robin Hood." The comedy featured 25 students from all four grade levels, 9-12. It also featured a "green" theme, highlighting the importance of forest conservation (between laughs!).



Josh Nowak Honored as 'Person of Character'



Josh Nowak, a counselor at Valencia High School, has received a Person of Character award from the City of Santa Clarita Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission. The award recognizes Nowak's work with the STRIVE program, which sends student teams to local elementary schools to teach respect for others and appreciation for the valley's growingly diverse population. The Person of Kindness and Character Counts program awards citizens who demonstrate kindness and good character in Santa Clarita. Each month, individuals are selected and honored during the Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Commission meetings and are also featured in The Signal newspaper. Candidates are nominated for performing a good deed, extending a helping hand, being a positive role model, promoting unity, volunteering, or demonstrating other signs of kindness and good character.



Chinese Rappers 'Rock Out' at Rally

This year's Chinese exchange group participated in Saugus High School's rally in support of the football team as they prepared to battle Valencia for the league championship. Each year the five students and teacher from Gao Xin No. 1 High School put on a show for the students and staff of their host school. Previously this has been some kind of culture show, but this year's group of Yuqi (William) Hu, Gaozheng (Allan) Jin, Shuangshuang (Holly) Ren, Junlin (Max) Liang and Linxiao Wang decided on a different kind of show. During the morning rally the five students stood at attention to sing the Chinese national anthem...and then broke into a Chinese rap, complete with some American-style moves as well as Chinese tai chi. The Saugus students loved the show! The Chinese students got cheers rivaling those for the football team.



Administrators Nominated for ACSA Awards

Five Hart District administrators have been nominated for Administrator of the Year awards from the Association of California School Administrators Region XV. Nominees are Bob Vincent, secondary principal; Michele Krantz, middle grades principal; Larry Oshodi, secondary co-administrator; Lynda Rick, adult education; and Sue Guthrie, business services. Dan Williams from Destiny Foundation, a motivational speaker who donates countless hours to Hart District schools, has been nominated for the Ferd Keisel Memorial Award for distinguished service to education, and Canyon High School Principal Bob Messina has been nominated for the David Millen Mentoring Award. Brittany Zahnle, a seventh grader at Rio Norte Junior High, was nominated by her elementary school for the Every Student Succeeding Award, for a student who has overcome great difficulty. All nominees will be honored at the Region XV dinner this spring, and winners at the regional level will move on to state competition.

Students Thank Fire Fighters



Yes I Can students at Saugus High School, under the guidance of senior teacher Mike Pepo and speech pathologist Donna Mann, showed their appreciation for the Santa Clarita Valley firefighters by awarding Fire Station 111 a certificate of appreciation and plaque for all their hard work and dedication during the recent fires. The students also brought a gift basket of treats for the firemen. Yes I Can is a school and community support class that encourages volunteering and social inclusion.



Canyon Hosts Speech, Debate Tournament

Canyon High School's Speech and Debate team hosted a Novice Individual Event tournament, with some 150 students from about 20 different schools participating. Students competed in categories such as Duo Interpretation, Oratorical Interpretation, Original Prose and Poetry, and many more. Two of Canyon's students earned Superior certificates: Garrett Cervetto for Original Prose and Poetry and Cynthia Lapos for Oratorical Interpretation.



Teachers Team for Humanities Lesson

Lindsey Villanueva and Stacey Weatherman joined their two Bowman High School social studies and English classes to combine their English lesson of "Lord of the Flies" with a discussion on the purpose and effectiveness of government. Vocabulary



words from the lesson were posted around the room and students worked both individually and as a group to find the meanings. A warm-up discussion also asked students to share their opinions regarding the purpose of government. The activity helped students understand both the concept of government and the meaning behind the literature they were reading.



Student Artists, Writers Win at Festival

Eighteen Hart District students have been named winners in the writing and art contests sponsored by the SCV Education Foundation in conjunction with last Saturday's SCV Literacy & Art Festival. Winners in the junior high short story competition included Dorothy Clemena*, Arroyo Seco; Sarah Struble, Placerita; and Erick Werner, Rancho Pico. Editorial writers in the junior high division included Dorothy Clemena* and Amanda Weber, Arroyo Seco; and Brooke Bryski, Placerita. Junior high poem honorees included Firas Eid*, Sierra Vista; Tabitha Branda, Arroyo Seco; and Samantha Bushman; Placerita. Winners in the junior high cartoon competition included Sarah Aranda*, Placerita; Gina Myung and Anthony Condello, Rancho Pico. In the high school division, short story winners included Yvonne Eadon* and Hunter Jones, Hart; and Shabnum Azizi, Academy of the Canyons. High school editorial winners included Whitney Henningfield*, Megan Indermill and Alex Gunning, all from Hart. Top winners (indicated by *), from the three finalists in each category, were announced on stage at the festival.

Science Students Visit Pilot Water System

On Tuesday, Nov. 18, a small group of students from Rio Norte Junior High School, along with teachers Nancy Phillips and Jason St. Peter, went to the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new water softening filtration system for Valencia, first of its kind in the nation. The filtration system was designed in the Netherlands in the 1970s. Valencia Water Company has brought the technology here to provide a better quality product to their customers. One community near Rio Norte Junior High of about 430 homes will pilot the program. Students were able to talk with State Senator George Runner and Mayor Bob Kellar and take pictures with them. They also took a tour to learn about the chemistry behind the filtration system.

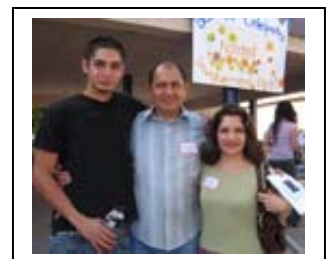


Bowman Invites Parents to Visit

National Parent Involvement Day was celebrated in style at Bowman High School with family members and guardians joining students on campus for the day. Counselors spoke about college and gave tips on how parents can stay involved with their students' education by using Bowman's Web site. Guests then accompanied their student to a class, learning first-hand what it's like to be a Bowman student. Some students initially were a bit nervous about



having their parents and guardians coming to visit their classes, but by the end of the day, the students said that they really enjoyed having their parents come to school.



Two Named Students of the Month



West Ranch High School senior Julia Sung and Golden Valley High school senior Emmanuel Toletino are recipients of the Lockheed Federal Credit Union Student of the Month award for September and October, respectively. Each has been selected because of overall performance, including academic accomplishments, extracurricular activities and leadership abilities. School counselor Suzanne VanAmberg at West Ranch High School and Principal Sal Frias at Golden Valley High School nominated the



students for the award based on their overall performance.

Students Sample Teacher Roles

Eleven students from Saugus High School traded in their classes for an opportunity to play teacher. Through the Junior Achievement Volunteer Program, the students traveled to Fair Oaks Ranch Community School where they taught grade appropriate materials focusing on “real life” information on jobs and careers, city and business planning, and the role of the government in the economy. According to JA’s Sabrina MacDougall: “This is a great way to get high school students to see what it’s really like to be a teacher.”



Sierra Vista Team Wins VIA STAR

Five students from Sierra Vista Junior High School are the top winners in this year’s VIA Star competition sponsored by the Valley Industrial Association. Student teams in grades K-12 are paired with a local business and must create a new product or service for their



business partner, with a business plan and additional audio/visual aides to promote it. Sierra Vista’s winning team members are Shayne Hartigan, Harsitha Sakhamuri, Logan Stern, Connell Crocker and Sal Gonzalez, coached by faculty member Lorraine Fulleman. The winning project was a new service called “SCV Sights to See!” for business partner Jessica Freude of the City of Santa Clarita. The students designed three tours: a nature tour, an historical tour, and an entertainment tour. To promote the service, the students presented a two minute commercial, a Web site, rack cards, and a business plan.



Ceramic Gargoyles Display Creativity

Art and literature combined recently in a display at West Ranch High School library. Students in Shannon Burgess’ ceramics class were asked to create a monster based on the concept of the medieval gargoyle. The pieces had to embody the concept of being unusual. Some students chose to make theirs scary while others went for fun and amusing. Using one of the three ceramic techniques that they have learned so far—coil, slab or pinch method—they practiced their skills in both hand building and painting with acrylic paint.



Sierra Vista Students Conduct Mock Election

Sierra Vista Students took part in a Mock Election on Nov. 4, voting on their choice for President from all the available political parties on the ballot as well as Propositions 2, 6, 7 and Measure SA. Student results were posted on the school Web site and their results almost mirrored the nation's results. Students also went through a History of Voting gallery walk in which they studied historical pictures from the nation’s history of voting which included African Americans and women earning the right to vote. Students were also able to watch live election coverage in the school media center. Student protestors were also on hand exercising their first amendment right, only to find out that it is illegal to protest within a proximity to polling places. Eighth grade history teachers Wendy Aird, Erin Acquaviva, Kellie Kontis and Julie Velazquez created a memorable and realistic voting experience for students. Parent volunteers served as poll workers along with librarian Lorraine Fulleman and assistant Jeanne Sisson.



Golden Valley Artist Wins at Expo

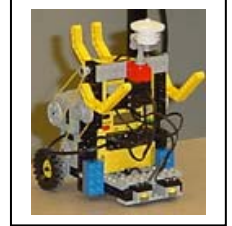
You Hwa Shin, from Golden Valley High School, won first place for her artwork at the recent Learning Product Expo in Pasadena. As first place winner in the under 17 category, You Hwa won art products from Blick, the main sponsor of the event, and from a number of other Expo vendors. You Hwa is planning on attending the Art Institute of San Francisco and is currently an Advanced Placement student in art. The art competition was open to any subject or theme and was judged by age group.



ROP Class Geared to Inventors, Designers, Builders



The Hart District's Regional Occupational Program is looking for students who like to imagine new designs and devices, take things apart to see how they work, or are interested in such topics as robotics, alternative energy vehicles and rocketry. Those are just some of the fields that will be explored in ROP Exploring Trades & Technology, a new class that will be offered in the winter/spring semester. Guided by an industry professional, students will experience both design and hands-on assembly of vehicles that will move from today into the future. Registration information



for the class is available from ROP advisors at all Hart District high schools.

Fair to Spotlight Summer Activities

Parents looking for summer activities for their children and vendors looking to provide those services are invited to get together at the second annual Summer Activities Fair, hosted by La Mesa Junior High School in cooperation with the City of Santa Clarita and the SCV Boys & Girls Club. This year's fair is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 7, at La Mesa Junior High and vendor applications are now being accepted. Admission is free for



local families seeking information on summer programs for elementary school through college age. Businesses interested in hosting fair booths or sending informational materials are invited to call La Mesa Counselor Kathy Gorlick at 250-0022, extension 122, or e-mail to kgorlic@hartdistrict.org.



Erickson Earns Eagle Scout Rank

Congratulations to Saugus High senior Matt Erickson, who has been named an Eagle Scout, the highest rank attainable in the Boy Scouts of America. To reach this level, scouts must earn at least 21 merit badges and demonstrate scout spirit, service, and leadership. Erickson's Eagle project included assembling 48 hygiene bags for The Children's Hunger Fund, which serves families from Bakersfield to Mexico. He has enlisted in the Marines on the delayed entry program and will be deployed to Camp Pendleton in June.



La Mesa Receives Mobil Grant

La Mesa Jr. High School has once again been recognized for academic excellence. The school has received a grant for \$500 from the Mobil Educational Alliance, a community outreach program that recognizes and supports outstanding educational programs throughout the country. The program is designed to provide Exxon and Mobil retailers with an opportunity to invest in the future of their communities through educational grants to neighborhood schools. The award was presented to La Mesa by Vasantha Devendran, manager of the local Mobil station at Sierra Highway and Via Princesa. The Alliance funds will be used by the school for resources to support Associated Student Body activities.

