

**FREE**

# School News

*Education + Communication = A Better Nation*

**Covering the Los Alamitos Unified School District**



Volume 18, Issue 89

February / March 2021



**McAuliffe and Oak Middle Schools are excited to announce the opening of their new "Well Spaces." (please see page 10)**



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## Honoring the Best of the Best Among Us



**Dr. Andrew Pulver**  
Superintendent

One of the best parts of my job is recognizing the outstanding work of my colleagues in the Los Alamitos Unified School District. The time has come now to honor the best of the best among our classified staff — those employees who work tirelessly to make sure our students have the safest and highest quality learning environment possible. I am proud to name Russell Mims, Cassandra Palacios, and Linda Loparco as our 2021 Classified Employees of the Year.

Mims, a night custodian at McAuliffe Middle School since 2001, is regarded as an integral part of the school community and focuses on student needs in his approach to his work. He truly embodies what it means to bring joy to work and can always be seen smiling, greeting every staff member by name, and tackling difficult tasks with a positive attitude.

Despite taking on more responsibility during the COVID-19 pandemic, Mims is always willing to help, no matter what the task is, to make his campus safe and ready for our students.



**Russell Mims, center.**

Palacios, a licensed vocational nurse at Los Alamitos High School, came to the District in 2013. A 1995 Griffin graduate and lifelong resident of our community, she turned to nursing after a first career in the mortgage industry. Even during these COVID-stressed times, Palacios exhibits calm under pressure, and her diligence in looking out for the health of all students and families is evident in her daily work. She realizes that health matters cannot always wait until the morning and it is not uncommon for parents or staff to receive a phone call or email from her late into the night or on weekends.

Palacios, who has five children, has also served as a youth basketball coach, team parent for youth baseball, Girl Scout Leader, room parent at Rossmoor Elementary, and as a board member for both the LAHS football and girls basketball teams.

Loparco, the lead food service assistant at McGaugh Elementary, has been with the District since 2000. For most of those years, she was well known to the high school students as she served morning snacks and lunch. Linda loves the connection she gets from serving food to her students and how these nutritious meals lead to their success in the classroom. In return, everyone she serves loves her passion, dedication, commitment and demeanor.



**Linda Loparco, center.**

Loparco moved to McGaugh in 2017 where she led a 30% increase in meal participation over two years until the COVID pandemic hit. Now, in addition to making sure students on campus are served, she also operates the drive-through meal distribution system to maintain the connection with our students attending remotely.

In their constant caring for all in their charge, Mims, Palacios, and Loparco all exemplify our District belief that we are all Better and Stronger Together. All three 2021 Classified Employees of the Year will be recognized at upcoming meetings of our District Board of Education.



**Cassandra Palacios, center.**



**Kay Coop**  
Founder/Publisher



*Netragrednik*

### Happy New Year!

It is sometimes difficult to think of this as a happy new year; however, as you read the articles in this issue you will appreciate the positivity in the classrooms.

You will read how teachers are keeping their students engaged and connected with innovative ways. They have virtual story time, science and

engineering experiments using items at home, instill the love of music virtually and much more...

This is our 18th year publishing the excellence from the Los Alamitos Unified School District. We converted all of our publications to digital with excellent results. Thank you for continuing to be loyal readers of *School News*.

Our next issue is April 14, 2021.

## School News

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Covering the

**LOS ALAMITOS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**FOUNDER/PUBLISHER:** Kay Coop  
562/493-3193 • [kay@schoolnewsrollcall.com](mailto:kay@schoolnewsrollcall.com)

**ADVERTISING SALES:** 562/493-3193

**CONTENT COORDINATOR:** Barbra Longiny

**GRAPHIC DESIGNER/PRODUCTION:**

Emily Ung

**COPY EDITORS:**

Kate Karp, Anna Zappia

**SOCIAL MEDIA:** Nancy Lueder

**Netragrednik** by Neta Madison



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P.O. Box 728, Seal Beach, CA 90740  
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## The Effects of COVID-19 on Tiny Hearts



**Saar Danon, M.D.**,  
medical director,  
Pediatric Cardiology  
and Congenital  
Cardiac  
Catheterization,  
MemorialCare  
Miller Children's &  
Women's Hospital  
Long Beach

Although COVID-19 does not impact children as much as adults, there are some risks. Researchers have learned that children who have been infected with COVID-19 can later experience cardiac effects due to Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS-C), which can occur weeks after exposure to COVID-19, and in some cases without symptoms during the initial infection. MIS-C is a condition where multiple organ systems become inflamed, including the heart, which can cause damage to heart's cells. This predominantly occurs in children younger than 14 but has been seen in up to 20 years of age.

Symptoms of MIS-C may include:

- Fever
- Rash
- Bloodshot eyes
- Fatigue
- Abdominal pain, vomiting or diarrhea

MIS-C is rare, and most children eventually get better with proper diagnosis and treatment.

If you suspect your child has MIS-C, seek medical attention so your child's doctor can order the appropriate studies to identify inflammation in his or her body. It is especially important to rule out cardiac inflammation by performing appropriate lab work, an electrocardiograph and/or an echocardiogram. Should MIS-C be diagnosed or suspected, your child's care team will treat it appropriately to help avoid or reduce any long-term effects. It is important that this includes specialized, pediatric cardiac care.

The Children's Heart Institute at MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach includes a comprehensive care team that can diagnose and treat virtually any heart condition for children of all ages, including the effects of MIS-C.

Learn more about the Children's Heart Institute at [millerchildrens.org/EliteHearts](https://millerchildrens.org/EliteHearts).

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## Experts in Pediatric Heart Care for Growing Hearts

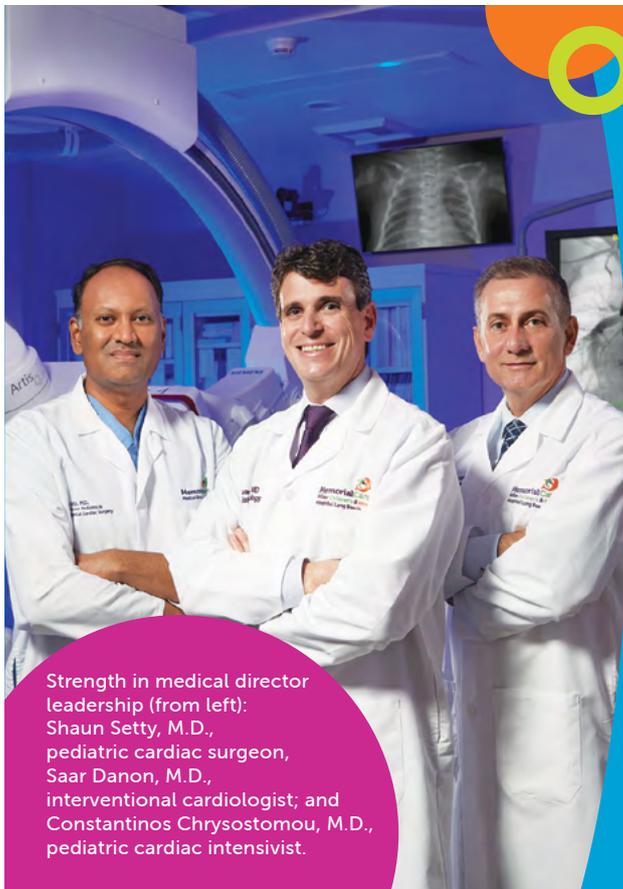
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Strength in medical director leadership (from left):  
Shaun Setty, M.D.,  
pediatric cardiac surgeon,  
Saar Danon, M.D.,  
interventional cardiologist; and  
Constantinos Chrysostomou, M.D.,  
pediatric cardiac intensivist.

# Seal Beach Animal Care Center

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## How Dogs Save Lives

By Murlyn E. Burkes, Cat Committee Liaison

There are studies that suggest that dogs may actually be an asset to your health. They get you to exercise. Often, people will walk their dogs for 30 minutes a day or more. That can be more than people who just walk without a dog. There is also research that suggests that dogs can lower your blood pressure. And pet owners who smoke have said that if their smoking caused any health issues for their pets, they would stop smoking. It is also believed that owning a dog may boost your immune system.

It has been noted that dog owners made fewer visits to the doctor than non-dog owners did. Another study suggests that canines can help decrease anxiety and loneliness. Dogs have made headlines over the years for saving their owners from imminent death due to dangers, such as fire. Dogs can usually feel the shaking of an earthquake seconds before it happens.

In addition to the love and joy they add to your days, dogs actually have a profound effect on your lifestyle and health. Owning or spending time with a dog can enhance your health, mood and social life. No wonder dogs are known as man's best friend!

## Parent To Parent



Jodie Lynn

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, often our kids were on their devices upwards of eight hours per day. What can parents do to keep them safe online and on their cell phones?

Give your kids a set of online safety rules that they will understand with explanations that they will believe and take to heart.

It's important for you to know which online games that your kids are playing. Many are multiplayer games where several online players can be together playing at once or just watching from around the world. This is highly dangerous because people can pretend to be someone else and of a certain age and can expose kids to unsuitable and unacceptable predatory language and content.

Remember not only to talk with your kids frequently about staying safe online, but also explain that anyone at any age can be cyberbullied. Explain why it's so important to think about what they are going to post at any given time or in any area before doing so, to keep their passwords safe, to always log off and not to click on links from people that they don't know. The right thing to do is to report the cyberbullying to an authoritative figure as well. They may just save a life.

You could also take their electronic devices away for a few hours each day, but for those hours that they're on them, rules and guidelines still need to be in place.

Snapchat is a program where people can send images, videos, etc. to friends which will disappear within 10 to 30 seconds.. The hidden danger is that those "private" moments are not really deleted. They're hidden in files on most phones and if someone takes a screen shot, the message, image or whatever can be posted anywhere.

Finsta is a fake Instagram account and if a screen shot is taken, it can show up anywhere online.

Be sure to read about popular apps and arm yourself with knowledge for options that you as the parent can do to help your kids be safe. A few are: Instagram, YouTube, Kik, Telegram, TikTok

There's phone apps offered to parents to help them monitor their kids' phone and online activities.

Look up how to set up filters and teach your kids how to recognize, delete and block it.

This whole cyber safety situation is extremely exhausting. But, there's no way of getting around it if you're going to be proactive in protecting your children.

Jodie Lynn is an award winning, internationally syndicated family/health and education columnist and best selling author. Her column Parent to Parent™ (www.ParentToParent.com) has been successful for more than 20 years. She is a regular contributor to several sites including *School News Roll Call* and has written four books and contributed to three others: *Mom CEO (Chief Everything Officer)*, *Having Doing*, and *Surviving it All!* and *Syndication Secret—What No One Will Tell You!* www.ParentToParent.com

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# Los Alamitos-Rossmoor Branch Library

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**Semra Bilsel**  
Branch Manager

## Zoom into Storytime now!

Please sign up for Storytime by emailing [ocplstorytimes@occr.ocgov.com](mailto:ocplstorytimes@occr.ocgov.com)

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### Wednesdays:

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6:30pm: Pajama Storytime, Stories, Songs, and Movement

### Thursdays:

10:30am — Chinese (Mandarin)  
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### Saturdays:

11:00am — Family Storytime, Music and Movement. Now is the Time to Get up and Move with your Family!  
2:00pm — Family Storytime: Stories, Songs, and Activities for the Whole Family

## New Chat Feature

Also, Los Alamitos/Rossmoor Library (OC Public Libraries) has launched a new library chat feature!

You can access a chat platform on our [ocpl.org](http://ocpl.org) home page to ask us any questions you have in mind and interest. We will help you quickly and accurately.

You have the option of asking a question in a chat box or using a text message, whichever you prefer.

It is available during our current business hours: Tuesday-Friday, 12-6 and Saturdays, 10-4.

It is available during our current business hours: Tuesday-Friday, 12-6 and Saturdays, 10-4.

Look for the chat bubble on the home page [ocpl.org](http://ocpl.org)!

Please call the Los Alamitos/Rossmoor Library for further questions.



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## Hopkinson *Elementary*

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**Evelyn Garcia**  
*Principal*

### Keeping Our Huskies Connected

Though things look different for our Huskies, we are so happy to share that our strong connection is thriving. We did not let distance affect our tight bond.

To ensure that we stay connected, Mrs. Garcia hosts monthly virtual meetings with our adult and student communities. Once a month, she virtually opens her office for a Coffee Connect with families and the community. These events are rich with information and are very interactive.

Mrs. Garcia also meets monthly with our Huskies@Home and Huskies on campus in a virtual format. The meetings are fun and engaging! From reading stories to listening to music and making lunch together, these meetings with Mrs. Garcia and our Huskies are always filled with joy.

These connections are what make Hopkinson Elementary School a tight community. It brings our Huskies joy to feel the connection in real time.

Mrs. Garcia openly welcomes all parents and students to call upon her at any time with questions or concerns.

## Lee *Elementary*

11481 Foster Rd., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4540 • <https://lee.losal.org>



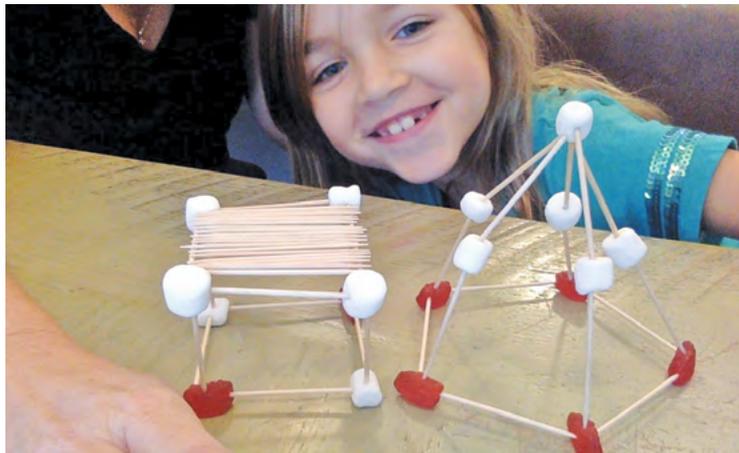
**Dr. Amy Vento**  
*Principal*

### Enthusiastic about STEAM

Lee Elementary School takes pride in the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) initiatives offered to our Leos. Students at Lee have opportunities to participate in hands-on

science and engineering activities every week.

Exciting STEAM challenges, provided by our media center teacher via Google Classroom, are accessed by all students at home. Learning from a distance has promoted unbelievable creativity in our students! It has forced our students to think outside the box and to be creative and innovative using materials they find at home.



All Leos are receiving high-quality instruction and critical-thinking challenges to develop collaboration, inquiry and problem-solving. Recently, we partnered with Growing Up Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM), a student organization at Los Alamitos High School, to teach science experiments and build interest in science and engineering. Our Leos were provided with materials to bring home, and they joined a Zoom meeting to participate in activities facilitated by Growing Up STEM.

Our Leos' curiosity and enthusiasm for learning is at an all-time high!

## Los Alamitos *Elementary*

10862 Bloomfield St., Los Alamitos, CA 90720  
562/799-4700 • <https://lae.losal.org>



**Gary Willems**  
*Principal*

### Working Harder Than Ever

LAE is moving forward to address the needs of our students, and to make sure that they leave this pandemic at the proper academic grade level and are ready for their future success.

We have adopted Reflex Math to help our Tigers with their math facts and fluency. This is an area of need that we detected this year, and it has been supported by our amazing

board of directors and district office. Our teachers have also continued to focus on Cognitive Guided Instruction (CGI) for math, and they are excited to see that our Tigers are not showing any major signs of regression in skills during the pandemic.

Our continued focus on depth and complexity for English language arts, and the addition of Reading Plus, have helped our students to remain at grade level since March, and again, without any major regression. It sounds like I am giving credit to our programs and district signature practices, but the true reason that our Tigers are excelling in these unparalleled times is our amazing community. We have the most dedicated teachers in the world who are working harder than ever to ensure that their students have every possible chance at success.

We also have students who are working very hard in school and at home to learn as much as possible. And of course, we have parents who have had their worlds turned upside down, but who have somehow managed to make sure that their students are prepared for success both this year and into the future.

As Dr. Pulver says, and as this year has highlighted, we are truly "Better Together." By working together, we have ensured the future success of our Tigers. Thank you to everyone who has worked so hard to make this possible.

## Los Alamitos *High School*

3591 W. Cerritos Ave., Los Alamitos, CA 90720  
562/799-4780 • <https://lahs.losal.org>



**Gregg Stone**  
*Interim Principal*

### LAHS Seniors Continue to Shine

#### Feben Worku

Congratulations LAHS senior, Feben Worku! Feben was selected as a semi-finalist for the Coca-Cola Scholars Program. The Coca-

Cola Scholars Program scholarship is an achievement-based scholarship awarded to graduating high school seniors. In addition to being an outstanding student in the classroom, Feben is a valuable member of the LAHS Varsity Soccer team and ASB.



#### Santiago Lopez

Congratulations to LAHS senior, Santiago Lopez! Santiago was selected as one of the 2021 YoungArts award winners. This select group represents the most accomplished young visual, literary, and performing artists from across the country. Santiago has participated in the LAHS Jazz Band 1 for four years where he plays the tenor saxophone.



#### Andy Fong

Congratulations to LAHS senior, Andy Fong! Next year, Andy will be heading to Cambridge, MA on a Quest Bridge National Scholarship where he will study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Go Engineers!



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**Dr. Ryan Weiss-Wright**  
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**Erin Kominsky**  
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### Spaces of Calm

In the LAUSD, our schools have seen a renewed focus on student mental health and social-emotional learning. For both McAuliffe and Oak Middle School, prioritizing our students' mental well-being is now more important than ever.

McAuliffe and Oak Middle Schools are excited to announce the opening of their new "Well Spaces." These are designed to improve our students' mental health, physical health, and well-being. In collaboration with the Children's Hospital of Orange County (CHOC), the Orange County Office of Education (OCDE), and the Los Alamitos Education Foundation (LAEF), both schools will now have a designated space on campus where students can receive counseling, coordinated health education, and self-care tools.

The Well Spaces are beautifully designed places of calm, with mindful and intentional activities that will assist students with issues that impact their ability to achieve in school. Aromatherapy, ambient sounds, and creative self-expression activities fill these special Well Spaces.

The Corner at McAuliffe and The Den at Oak will be staffed by school counselors and mental health district support staff. We are excited to be among the first in Orange County to offer these great resources to our students.



### McGaugh *Elementary*

1698 Bolsa Ave., Seal Beach, CA 90740 • 562/799-4560 • <https://mcgaugh.losal.org>



**Dr. Issaic Gates**  
Principal

### Keeping the Community Connected

During December and January, the McGaugh Elementary community was intentional about creating opportunities to stay connected to one another while adhering to COVID-19 safety protocols. Below are some Sea Lion highlights:

Through Project SEEK, which is a McGaugh parent-led and -supported nonprofit group, we hosted our inaugural

Virtual Ugly Sweater Bingo event via Zoom! Project SEEK's sole purpose of raising funds is to support enrichment programs at McGaugh Elementary School. Our school is all the better for having them create moments of connectivity. Not even a pandemic slows them down!

As principal, I had the honor of calling the bingo numbers and keeping spirits joyful. We enjoyed our time together playing bingo with our friends and neighbors. Wearing ugly sweaters added an element of festiveness

and fun. At the same time, we had the opportunity to be together as a community and raise much-needed funds to support campus programs.

In January, we kicked off the new year with McGaugh's International Culture Club. The group launched a parent book club. Our first read was the book *Educated: A Memoir* by Tara Westover. This book club was and is a fantastic way for parents, teachers and administrators to share and learn perspectives. I was enriched by both the text and the conversation during the book-group meeting. The second book that we will read and discuss is *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah.

Part of the strength of Los Alamitos Unified School District is the intentionality and support of district personnel. Because of our core value of connecting to all students, Grace Delk, director of Special Education and Mental Health, joined me for a Coffee with the Principal. Together, we had an opportunity to meet with families and foster conversations that focused on further improving the community, communication and collaboration.

## Rossmoor *Elementary*

3272 Shakespeare Dr., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4520 • <https://rossmoor.losal.org>



**Dr. Amy Coltey**  
*Principal*

### One Word for 2021

Our Rossmoor Knights kicked off the new year with selecting one word that would be their focus this year. I provided a bedtime story for our school

community on Facebook Live where I read John Gordon, Dan Britton, and Jimmy Page's book, *One Word for Kids*. This story helped our students and their families to start thinking about what one word they would choose for the New Year - much like a New Year's resolution.

In the story, we reviewed the three steps to selecting your one word.

1. Look into your heart and decide what one word will help you be your best?
2. Look up and around you and believe that there is one word meant for you.
3. Look out and live your one word.



With this being our second year participating in selecting one word it has turned into a great motivator for us to think about what will help us be the best version of ourselves. As we work toward our goals we will keep that one word in mind as an inspiration and to help us stay on track. At Rossmoor we are eager for 2021 and look forward to a fantastic year ahead!

## Weaver *Elementary*

11872 Wembley Rd., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4580 • <https://weaver.losal.org>



**Dr. Todd Schmidt**  
*Principal*

### New Music Teacher

Greek philosopher Plato once said, "Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything." At Weaver, our music program has been inspiring, motivating and encouraging to our entire student community.

This year, we have a new music teacher, David Anderson, who has brought his enthusiasm and joy for music to his lessons for our students. Each Wednesday, students and families look

forward to seeing what new skill they'll learn, what new topic will be covered, and what new adventure Mr. Anderson will be taking them on. In totally virtual lessons, Mr. Anderson uses technology, storytelling and creativity to bring music alive to our students. Topics have included our school song, Veterans Day and learning to do the Monster Mash. He brought our first-graders together for an amazing holiday performance—again, completely virtual—and his ability to combine art with music using apps like Blob Opera and Flipgrid not only keep students engaged but also help them develop a lasting love and appreciation of music.



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