

# School News

*Education + Communication = A Better Nation*

**Covering the Los Alamitos Unified School District**



Volume 19, Issue 97

October 2022

## Welcome Back to School



**Weaver Elementary students promoting kindness and acceptance during P.E.A.C.E. Week, which stands for People Exhibiting Appreciation and Compassion for Everyone.**

**S.T.E.A.M.  
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# *RACE TO SPACE* **READING CHALLENGE**

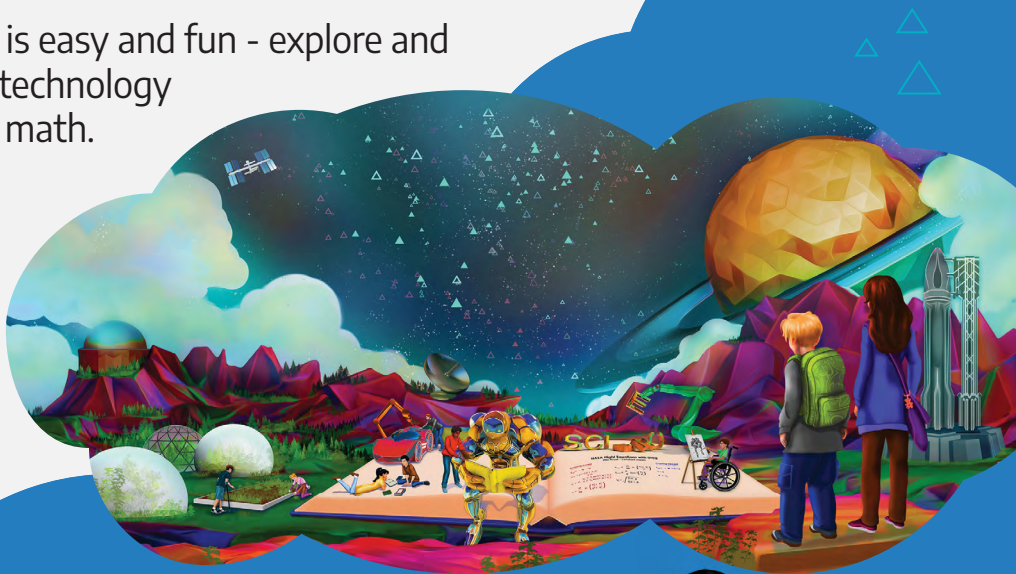
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## Los Alamitos Unified Supports a Multifaceted Approach to Mental Health and Wellness

*By Marlys Davidson, Board Member*

For decades, Los Alamitos Unified has been known for providing a wide variety of robust programs that focus on what we like to call the “Four A’s:” academics, the arts, activities and athletics. However, behind these four A’s is a priority to build positive character in all students and support their physical, mental and social-emotional health. As written directly into our Board Priority Goals and District Core Values, our goal is to cultivate a thriving and safe culture that ensures a caring, inclusive, equitable, and student-centered environment. We continue to focus on wellness for students and staff and strengthening the physical, social and emotional supports provided to our students. Here are just a few of the ways Los Alamitos Unified is prioritizing the mental health and wellness of our students and staff.

### Wellness Counselors and Full-Time School Psychologists at all sites

In collaboration with the Board of Education, teachers, classified staff and administrators, the district this year added additional full-time school psychologists to support the social-emotional health and wellness of all students. With the addition of these new positions, every school site in the district now has a full-time school psychologist to help focus on intervention and provide individualized support for students. Over the past few years, the district has increased staffing by hiring wellness counselors who provide direct social and emotional support for students, staff and families, at every grade level throughout the district.

### Wellness Warriors and Monthly Wellness Initiatives

The district’s Wellness Warriors team launched last year and has engaged students with individual and group counseling as well as pushing into elementary school classrooms for monthly lessons on subjects like kindness, wellness and mental health. The Wellness team brings information, resources, activities to classrooms, and provides students the opportunity to participate in lunchtime activities, and monthly wellness initiatives.

### WellSpace Centers

The District has also partnered with the Orange County Department of Education, Children’s Health of Orange County, and the Los Alamitos Education Foundation (LAEF), to create school-based “WellSpace” centers at both McAuliffe and Oak Middle Schools that encourage students to take a break from life’s daily stressors in thoughtfully designed, supervised environments that are safe, calming and inclusive.

The District is once again partnering with LAEF to expand WellSpace centers at all of our school sites. Earlier this year, LAEF donated \$18,000 to cover the cost of furnishing and decorating WellSpace at our six elementary school sites. LAEF also recently donated \$245,00, a record donation, to fund the construction, furnishing and decor of a brand new WellSpace at Los Alamitos High School, which should open this school year.

As a collective Board of Education and school district, we firmly believe that our decisions to increase mental health staff and provide structured, preventative support that begins in elementary school for all students, will have widespread effects that not only support students’ social emotional wellbeing, but their academic performance as well.



**Kay Coop**  
Founder/Publisher



*Netragrednik*

## School News

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**Covering the  
LOS ALAMITOS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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Welcome back to a new school year! By now students are settled into their routines. This issue is full of wonderful articles and pictures of happy students. As you read you can feel the excitement.

The library article on page 7 shares information on all of their

options available for the months of October & November.

Students are back into sports so please read the MemorialCare Medical Group article on page 5 about keeping your child healthy.

Our next issue is December 7.



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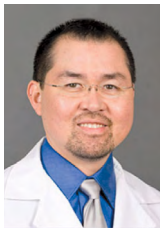
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## Rest & Proper Training Can Help Keep Your Child Healthy During Fall Sports



**Eric J. Wong, MD, FAAP**  
pediatrician,  
MemorialCare  
Medical Group  
San Juan  
Capistrano

Now that school is back in session, active young children and teenagers are going to start getting back into playing the sports they love for their school or club teams. While having them be physically active is important, it is equally as important to remember to ensure their safety, especially with fall and winter sports, such as football, soccer and basketball.

Physically intensive sports like football and basketball leave children at high risk of injuries such as:

- Fractures • ACL/Knee injuries
- Muscle strains and contusions
- Sprains, commonly within the ankles or hands
- Shoulder injuries

Fortunately, much of the risk for these injuries can be mitigated. Encouraging your child to warm up before, and stretching after physical activity, are also a very effective, yet overlooked, ways to prevent injuries, especially overuse injuries, sprains, and strains.

Warming up increases the blood flow in your child's body, allowing more oxygen to reach their muscles, which helps your child's body perform more effectively.

Stretching afterwards allows your child's body to not only maintain the joints' range of motion, but maintains the muscles' flexibility, strength, and health, allowing them to heal more efficiently.

Children who are actively participating or wish to participate in sports should understand when it is time for them to stop training, as rest is often overlooked in the pursuit of self-improvement. To avoid muscle strains and ligament and joint injuries, athletes need to give their bodies enough time to properly heal.

Encouraging and supporting your child to practice these safety tips will leave them better prepared to protect themselves from injury out on the field.

To schedule an appointment or speak to a Telephone Advice Nurse, call us at 877-MYMEMCARE (696-3622).

For more information about the MemorialCare Medical Group — San Juan Capistrano Health Center, please visit [memorialcare.org/SJC](http://memorialcare.org/SJC).



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### Adopting Pets Whose Owners have Died

*By Murlyn E. Burkes, Cat Committee Liaison*

Animals really do grieve when their owners die and signs of grief can involve lots of issues including non-use of litter boxes or other forms of behavioral disturbances. Despite the fact that cats are often aloof, they are social animals that form attachments to two and four footed family members. They do indeed mourn.

It's normal for a cat to have behavioral disturbances because they have bonded with their owner so much. But with time and patience, those issues will resolve.

Recently, Emma and Zena Marina lost their owner of 7 years. They were returned to the shelter where they had been adopted as kittens. They are well-adjusted and loving cats. Please consider adopting these cats together. You won't regret it!



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# Los Alamitos-Rossmoor Branch Library

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**Cassandra Sargent**  
Branch Manager

## Call or Come By

Los Alamitos – Rossmoor Library is excited to start the school year with you. Give us a call or stop by Monday - Thursday 10:00am -- 7:00pm and Saturday 9:00am – 5:00p. We continue to offer to-go services, monthly grab 'n go crafts, and zoom storytimes. For more information about our events, visit our homepage <https://www.ocpl.org/libraries/los-alamitos-rossmoor>

October is a busy month for fun activities ranging from Discovery Club to Pumpkin Decorating and even earning burgers just for reading! Check out some of our events happening below and we look forward to seeing you here!

**Cover to Cover Club**, October 1st - November 12th. Children who read five books will earn a free hamburger or cheeseburger. Ages 4 to 12 eligible to participate. Sign up at your local library.

**Bring your Own Pumpkin Decorating**, October 26th, 11-1p and 4-6p, BYO pumpkin and drop in to carve or decorate it at the library. We'll have paint, glitter, glue and more so you can really get creative! Open to ages 4-12.

**Lego Club**, Saturdays 2p, Children of all ages can stop by for our weekly LEGO Club! Build on your own or in a team, all LEGOs will be provided. We'll even have big blocks for our smallest builders!

**Discovery Club**, October 20th, 4p Open to ages 5-10, have fun with some spooky STEAM activities! Sign-ups begin October 17th (registration required)!

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# Hopkinson *Elementary*

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**Jason Farvour**  
*Principal*

## **We are All Huskies!**

This year at Hopkinson, and every year, we are focused on our shared commitment to connecting with all of our students and to provide a strong sense of belonging. Our theme for the year, We Are All Huskies, helps to serve as a reminder that while we have many great and unique characteristics that make us special, we also share collective experiences that unite us.

We recently connected our Huskies with one another at our P.E.A.C.E. Week event. This stands for “People Exhibiting Acceptance and Compassion for Everyone.” Throughout the week, our Huskies were engaged in classroom and lunch-time activities that reinforced kindness and helped to prevent social isolation, as well as taught us how to support one another.

The week concluded with a celebration of our commitment to the Husky community, and connected our primary and upper-grade classrooms into “Husky Buddy” partnerships for a year-long experience of togetherness. A huge thank-you goes to our teachers who embraced these week-long activities, both Angie Haas for helping to lead our assemblies, and Amanda Lenhart for helping coordinate activities. Thanks also goes to our Hopkinson PTA for all of their support throughout the week.

As we move towards future celebrations, like Kindness Week, we will continue to highlight our ongoing practice to foster inclusion, acceptance, and kindness, as well as affirming our belief that We Are All Huskies!



**All Hopkinson students pose for their P.E.A.C.E. Week picture in support of inclusion, kindness and acceptance of all students!**





**Laura Trotter**  
Interim Principal

## Mr. Poppen is Our Fam-Lee!

Lee Elementary has had a fantastic start to our school year! During the week of September 19th our Leos celebrated P.E.A.C.E. Week, which stands for “People Exhibiting Appreciation and Compassion for Everyone.” Every day of the week has a theme, with connected activities like read-alouds, quotes, videos, and spirit days. However, the best part of P.E.A.C.E. Week for our Leos is the yearly visit by Brent Poppen, a visit that is supported by our Lee PTA.

Brent Poppen is an author, counselor, and an international motivational speaker. A sports accident at the age of 16 caused a spinal cord injury that left him paralyzed for life. Brent became a quadriplegic, losing complete use of his legs and with some paralysis in his upper extremities.

This was an ending in many ways, but also a beginning to journeys he never dreamed! Brent earned a bronze medal in wheelchair rugby. He has also received numerous gold medals and world titles in both tennis and rugby. During his visits, Brent speaks at grade-level assemblies, visits every classroom, and engages with our students on the playground to give them a chance to sit in and use his rugby and tennis wheelchairs. He makes every Leo feel special, and shows them that they do matter.



**Mr. Poppen with Karter Banfield, Maddie Tamms and Karson Banfield.**  
These students crafted the hand grip on the bat so Mr. Poppen could hit a ball.

Brent also has a love for baseball. One of Lee’s alumni helped design a glove for him to catch with. Three current Leos helped design a special fitting on a bat so that he could hit a ball again. Everyone at Lee loves Mr. Poppen, and this year is the 10th anniversary of his visits!

His welcome appearances help to show our students that they can also overcome challenges, and that those with disabilities can do hard things too!



**Mr. Poppen visiting a 4th Grade Classroom**



# Los Alamitos *Elementary*

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



**Gary Willems**  
*Principal*

## Neurodiversity and PEACE Week

Los Alamitos Elementary School kicked off the year by Celebrating Neurodiversity and PEACE Week. Our goal this year was to combine celebrating neurodiversity and building acceptance with what makes us all unique. By combining this with the goals of PEACE week, we had a great week of learning. Teachers gave lessons each day centered around celebrating differences and

working towards building a peaceful school and society. Each day had a specific theme.

Monday: "Start with Hello" - Wear red to show your love, support, and acceptance of neurodivergent individuals. Tuesday: "Celebrate the beauty in the diverse spectrum of the human mind" - Wear the color of the rainbow for your grade level. Wednesday: "What's your passion Wednesday" - Dress up as something you love! Thursday: "Magnificent Mind Thursday" - Wear mismatched clothes. Friday: "Sensory Friendly Friday" - Dress up in your most comfy clothes and spirit wear!

This was a great week!





# Los Alamitos High School

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



**Christiana Kraus**  
*Principal*

## Connecting Griffins to Griffins

Reacclimating students back into high school student life is an evolving process that reintroduces and reinvents campus experiences. Over the past 18 months, Los Alamitos High School students and staff have collaborated to bring back Griffin favorites and establish new traditions. The key component has been providing students with leadership opportunities that put them back in the driver's seat of student life.

GWAM (Griffins with a Mission), a student-led community-building retreat to develop empathy and understanding among freshmen students, was reintroduced this fall after a three-year absence. Prioritizing a freshman first day paved the way for the return of Link Crew, which saw over 140 upperclassmen facilitate a two-day workshop



to welcome incoming freshmen to high school. ASB, a collective body of over 50 student leaders from all grade levels, is at the center of nearly everything student-related, from the Los Al Locos (Back-to-Back Student Section of the Year) to Griffin Games, a weeklong friendly competition culminating in an interactive field day assembly.

In addition to our growing programs that foster socialization and student connections, our school has implemented an academic peer-mentor program. We have over 40 juniors and seniors that are supporting their peers in various academic classes

based on interests and strengths. They assist students with assignments and developing organization/study skills, and help provide guidance and advocacy strategies to navigate their path through high school

With these opportunities, LAHS has created a campus culture that empowers hundreds of Griffin Leaders to create the high school experience that Griffin students deserve.





# McAuliffe *Middle School*

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



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

## Connections for Every Student!

McAuliffe has had a GREAT start to the school year! We are excited to have students in grades 6, 7, and 8 connecting to school through clubs, intramural

sports, and campus celebrations and activities. Students have already competed in their first round of intramural sports, Punt/Pass/Kick, and have moved into Intramural Football.

We are also thrilled to bring back over 40 school clubs for students to join based on student interest—middle schoolers love old favorites like Best Buddies, Make a Wish, and CJSF and have also worked with teachers to create some new clubs, like Authors and Illustrators, SAVE Promise, and Improv Club.

We know how critical it is for students to reconnect with school this year and we are so happy to see them getting plugged in in different ways!





# McGaugh *Elementary*

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



**Wendy Wood**  
Principal

## 'Walk in My Shoes'

Welcome, Sea Lions, to the 2022–23 school year! I am excited to begin my fourth year at McGaugh Elementary School and am humbled and honored to start my first year as principal.

The school year kicked off with many positive activities focused on Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) through R.A.H. behavior assemblies

and building connectedness through the September wellness challenge. The wellness challenge included classroom lessons from the board-adopted Second Step social-emotional learning curriculum. It also included the introduction of our new "WellSpace" classroom, which is open at recess three days a week. Finally, we celebrated PEACE Week, which stands for People Exhibiting Appreciation and Compassion for Everyone!

This year's highlight was McGaugh's 25th annual Come Walk in My Shoes event. Motivational speaker, quadriplegic and Paralympian Brent Poppen; former McGaugh student Brinley Reiswig; a parent diagnosed with dyslexia; an occupational therapist; and education specialists discussed and built awareness around speech, dyslexia, vision, hearing, and large- and fine-motor skills impairments. Students then navigated through activities that replicated these impairments, which are overcome every day by persons with disabilities.

Ms. Reiswig, while sharing her experience with hearing loss and getting cochlear implants at 15 months of age, told students that we are all different.



**Former McGaugh student, Brinley Reiswig, shares her story of hearing loss and getting cochlear implants at the age of 15 months with McGaugh Sea Lions.**

"We all have the ability to achieve whatever we want in this world with hard work and determination," she said. "Come Walk in my Shoes' is about creating understanding, recognizing that everyone has something to contribute to the world, and that everyone deserves to feel valued."

The purpose is to help students develop empathy and compassion while also celebrating personal strengths. It is truly a day for students to learn empathy, compassion and awareness.



**Students at McGaugh Elementary take part in stations about vision and dyslexia during the annual event "Come Walk in my Shoes" which aims to develop empathy and compassion while celebrating personal strengths.**



# Oak Middle School

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



**Evelyn Garcia**  
Principal

## Club Rush at Oak

Understanding that student connection to school is a key factor in ensuring success, we hosted Club Rush at Oak. Club Rush is an effort to provide a wide range of clubs for our Lions to join. It is our goal that all Lions join at least one club. Being part of a club fosters the necessary skills in the areas of communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. It connects kids to one another through like interests.



Club Rush 2023 hosted over 30 clubs. The clubs were out at lunch ready to welcome new members. Club leaders prepared handouts, showcase boards and were out during their lunch to make a difference on campus and beyond.

Our amazing Oak PTA supports our clubs and helped with Club Rush setup, volunteered during the event and helped take everything down. We are so thankful for a wonderful event.







**Amy Coltey**  
Principal

## PEACE Week at Rossmoor

I wanted to thank all of our families and Knights for participating in our recent PEACE Week activity (People Exhibiting Appreciation and Compassion for Everyone). Here at Rossmoor, we celebrate all of our students and families, and work hard to make our school a peaceful place where everyone is able to learn and feel safe and included.

In September, PEACE Week is just one of the many special events and activities that we do together to help build peace in our school. Our Knights were excited recently to be gathering in their first house meeting of the year as we launched our PEACE Week with a video on the “Power of Saying Hello,” and included others on campus

to ensure peace at their school! The students listened to a read-aloud of the book *The Invisible Boy*, which was provided by our Knight Leadership Council to help understand the power that small acts of kindness can help others feel included.

On the first day of PEACE Week, our Knight Leadership Council students were eager to greet all of our Knights at each gate with positive signs and hello stickers! In addition, Rossmoor is excited to be working on a Peace Project this year.

We are also building a new Peace Library that will be located in the Media Center. As part of the Rossmoor Peace Project, supported by a grant from Chapman University, our students can now find new books that talk about peace, global diversity, bullying prevention, kindness, and much more.





## Weaver *Elementary*

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



**Dr. Todd Schmidt**  
*Principal*

### Bring on the Foam!

This year, the Weaver PTA Jog-A-Thon was not only an amazing opportunity for our community to come together to raise needed funds for our school, it was also a chance to have a whole lot of foamy fun!

As an added incentive, for each level raised, our #WeAreWeaver community earned a school-wide reward. For the first level, our students and staff will get to choose the Halloween costume of our principal, Dr. Schmidt.

At the second level, Dr. Schmidt will once again take his place in the dunk tank! Finally, when we reach the third and final level, all students and staff members will have the chance to take part in a giant inflatable obstacle course!

We are so grateful for the friends and family members who contributed to our students, and the programs that help make them shine!

A special thanks goes to Mrs. Tricia Boylan and Mrs. Jessica Delavara and their amazing team for organizing our first-ever Foam Run. As was evidenced not only by the money raised but the smiles and laughter on our students' faces, it was a huge success!

