

For Immediate Release
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Riding into 90: Former Fullerton School District Superintendent Takes a Victory Lap on a Mower



Retired FSD Superintendent Duncan Johnson stands with his daughter (holding balloons to his right) and other family and FSD staff in front of the lawn mower that fulfilled his 90th birthday wish.

(Fullerton, CA) - Former Fullerton School District (FSD) Superintendent Duncan Johnson, who led the district for 15 years before retiring in 1995, returned to a district campus recently, but not for a meeting or a ceremony. This time, he was there to fulfill a birthday dream.

As Johnson's 90th birthday approached, his daughter, Juliet Gardner, contacted the district with an unusual but heartfelt request.

"I don't know if there is anyone still around who worked with him," she wrote in an email.

"Dad turns 90 next month. He is not asking for a big party, but our family wants to do something special for him... He has always wanted a rider mower; he covets one. But since we don't have the need for one, his dream has never come true. So I was thinking, maybe he could have a chance to use a rider mower. Maybe at Pacific Drive or Hermosa Drive some afternoon or weekend?"

True to the district's spirit of care and community, the request was met with a "let's make this happen" response. With help from FSD's Director of Facilities, Maintenance, and Operations Eddie Carbajal and team, Johnson's dream was brought to life.



Johnson, with a wide smile and his birthday balloons, after fulfilling a lifelong wish of operating a riding lawn mower

When Johnson arrived on site near the district's maintenance yard and on a grassy area next to Pacific Drive Elementary, he was surprised by his family and FSD staff with the news that his birthday wish was coming true. He was given the choice between a modest John Deere 1575 mower and a larger John Deere 5090E tractor. He selected the lighter, more agile option, and, with a wide grin, Johnson confidently mowed two rows of grass, impressing staff with his natural skill.

It was all thumbs-up and smiles at the end, with a grateful Johnson and family sharing their thrill this was made possible and an FSD staff honored to celebrate the legacy of a respected former leader in such a unique and meaningful way.



Johnson stands with his hand on Carbajal's shoulder (to the left), thanking him for the experience.

Johnson, who turned 90 on April 29, moved to Fullerton with his wife Carolyn in 1962. He began his educational career teaching English at Buena Park High School, eventually moving to an assistant principal job at Troy High School. His leadership journey continued as principal of Nicolas Junior High, and finally, as superintendent of the Fullerton School District, where he served with distinction until his retirement.

The Fullerton School District (FSD) is located in northern Orange County, California, and serves over 11,400 students in transitional kindergarten (TK) through eighth grade. FSD is home to 15 elementary schools, two TK through eighth-grade schools, three junior high schools, and a distance learning and home school program. FSD features unique programs for students, including a Dual Language Academy for Spanish and Korean languages; a Performance Academy Sports Program that offers a traditional in-person learning experience with time for advanced athletic training integrated into the school day; and robust before, after, and summer school programs. The mission of the Fullerton School District is to work collaboratively with the community to provide an innovative, high-quality educational experience for all students in a safe learning environment. FSD's motto, "Great Schools - Successful Kids," signifies that all FSD students will be given the tools and instruction to achieve academic excellence, hone interpersonal skills, and develop technological expertise to contribute as productive citizens in a democratic society.

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