SpotLight

July 2003 No.25

The newsletter for Los Angeles Unified School District employees

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT OFFICER NAMED

Los Angeles Unified School Superintendent Roy Romer announced the appointment of Renee Jackson as Executive Management Officer to work directly with the Chief Operating Officer (COO), Tim Buresh. Ms. Jackson will establish a performance enhancement team that will review District operations at all levels to decrease costs and improve productivity. Areas to be examined include procurement and business services, information and technology, risk management, school safety, human resources, District interaction with the Personnel Commission, accounting and finance, local district offices and school operations.

Ms. Jackson, formerly District Superintendent of Local District G in South Los Angeles, brings with her 32 years of experience in the LAUSD from the instructional side. She exhibited strong skills as a manager of her local district and prior to that as the supervisor of nine clusters. Ms. Jackson started with the District as an elementary teacher at 118th St. Elementary School and eventually became principal at Woodcrest and then King Elementary schools. She was also a Staff Relations Coordinator, which further developed her skills working with personnel and the business needs of the District.

"The appointment of Ms. Jackson to this post provides much-needed resources to mesh the business and instructional side of the District and establishes assistance in an area that is stretched too thin," said Superintendent Romer.

"The District must handle hard choices in the coming months in order to live within a shrinking budget, while continuing to grow at a rapid rate," said Chief Operating Officer Buresh. "We cannot afford to let any of these conditions curtail our rapid rate of academic achievement. Ms. Jackson's team is empowered to examine any aspect of our business, and my office will ensure that the recommendations that her team develop will be implemented.

"I am looking forward to this opportunity to work inside the Operations office to merge my school-based experience with my business operations background to improve the overall efficiency of the District," said Renee Jackson. "This comes at a very critical time when every bit of operational intelligence we employ can make a difference in reaching our core mission to improve academic achievement."

New, Re-Elected Board Members Sworn In

Los Angeles Board of Education members recently sworn in during installation ceremonies are, left to right, Mike Lansing (re-elected District 7), David Tokofsky (re-elected District 5), Marguerite LaMotte (District 1) and Jon Lauritzen (District 3).

The Los Angeles Board of Education on July 1 installed and welcomed newly-elected members of the board Marguerite Poindexter LaMotte and Jon Lauritzen, and swore in re-elected school board members David Tokofsky and Mike Lansing.

The four elected board members, who represent Districts 1, 3, 5 and 7, were installed during a ceremony at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, followed by a reception.

L.A. SCHOOLS, TELEMUNDO LOS ANGELES FORM PARTNERSHIP

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and Telemundo Los Angeles have launched an innovative partnership aimed at improving the academic achievement of students in Los Angeles.

The LAUSD/Telemundo partnership debuted on July 16 during Telemundo 52's 6 p.m. newscast, with an education phone bank staffed by the LAUSD. Parents and students were invited to call with questions about L.A. schools.

The LAUSD/Telemundo year-long partnership includes a series of on-air events and news features designed to bring "nuts and bolts" information about public schools and education to parents. Parents will learn how to navigate the L.A. school system, from enrolling children in school and helping them with homework to preparing them for college.

More than 72 percent of LAUSD's 750,000 kindergarten-12th grade students are Latino and nearly half speak Spanish at home. Telemundo Los Angeles, which broadcasts on KVEA-TV (Channel 52) and its sister station KWHY-TV (22), make up the second largest Spanish-language television station in the city.

"Telemundo is a tremendous partner in the district's efforts to provide our Spanish-speaking parents with meaningful and useful information about supporting their children's education," said José Huizar, president of the LAUSD Board of Education. "Increasing access to valuable information and opportunities empowers parents and families to get involved with schools and help us to improve student achievement. We hope to increase the number of Latino students who go on to college."

"This is a magnificent opportunity for us to work in a cooperative spirit with an aggressive Spanish-language broadcaster in this market to inform an important segment of Los Angeles about what is happening in our public schools and the progress we are making," said LAUSD Superintendent Roy Romer. "We will also be looking for ways to share resources between KVEA and our educational television station KLCS that will help develop public awareness about on-going programs in the District."

Studies have shown that the degree of parent involvement correlates with student achievement. The more involved the parents are, the better their children will do in school.

LAUSD Mission Statement: The teachers, administrators and staff of the Los Angeles Unified School District believe in the equal worth and dignity of all students and are committed to educate all students to their maximum potential.

SUPERINTENDENT HONORED WITH EDUCATION AWARD

Roy Romer, School Superintendent for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and former Governor of Colorado, has been recognized for his outstanding contributions to American education.

Romer, who has implemented a number of successful education reforms since becoming superintendent of the second largest school district in the nation in 2000, was presented on July 16 with the James Bryant Conant Award, one of the most prestigious awards in the education community by the Education Commission of the States (ECS). The Conant award is named for ECS' co-founder.

Under his leadership, Romer has tackled several education challenges in the LAUSD. Since July 2000, Romer has launched a successful instruction program that has resulted in significant improvements in math and reading scores, in some instances above the national average, among K-5 students in the District. He has also introduced a secondary literacy program for middle and senior high school students who are reading below grade level and he has pushed forward a massive school construction program that is in the process of building 80 new schools and 60 existing school expansions to help relieve overcrowding at many schools in the district.

"It's a pleasure to return home to Colorado and to receive such a prestigious and important recognition from a group of educators that I respect so deeply," said Romer, who attended the Conant Award banquet at The 2003 National Forum on Education Policy in Colorado. "This is a job I truly enjoy doing on behalf of the students of the Los Angeles Unified School District and I am humbled and appreciative of this honor."

Romer was credited for his forward thinking and the bold steps he has taken to improve education. "Not many people are as deserving of the Conant Award as Roy Romer," said Ted Sanders, ECS president. "He has positively touched the lives of millions of people. Roy exemplifies outstanding service to education and sets an example for all of us to follow."

Hundreds Turn Out for Retirement Reception

Between 250 and 300 people attended the annual Superintendent's Retirement Reception in June at the Wilshire Grand Hotel & Centre in downtown Los Angeles. Among those who attended the reception were James and Ola West, above, husband and wife, who retired together after 50 years of service to the District.

Weigand E.S. Host Literacy Fair

On June 6, the students and families of Weigand Ave. Elementary School participated in the first annual Weigand Literacy Fair, designed to promote the joys of literacy and increase school-wide parent involvement.

This full day of literacy fun included students participating in reading and writing challenges. There were fiction and nonfiction writing contests, sporting events filled with vocabulary challenges and spelling bee face-offs. Students also wrote and performed original raps with professional musicians and shared stories with local police officers.

The first annual Weigand E.S. Literacy Fair was a success for both students and teachers.

The largest crowds could be found around the °ßPersuasive Pie Toss,°® in which students wrote persuasive arguments as to why they should get to throw a pie at a particular teacher or administrator. Winners of the writing contest took their best shots, often getting a bulls-eye with their pies.

Students who successfully completed five of the morning's literacy challenges won the right to select a free book to take home. In the afternoon, all Weigand students, staff and guests received a free lunch. That was followed by a show at the Queen's Theater where students played traditional carnival games for prizes.

Several local organizations and businesses contributed to the program's success. The Lighthouse Community Outreach group brought a computer bus, musical instruments for students to play and many prizes. Donations were also made by the Watts Coffee House, Walmart, Children's Book World, Book Soup, McDonald's and many generous individuals.

More than 800 people attended this successful event. The turn out was phenomenal for a first time event, considering the school has a total enrollment of 540 students, with approximately one-third of those students off-track.

A second annual literacy fair is being planned for 2004 with hopes of getting more parents and families actively involved in their children's academic life.

Idaho Site of Education Conference

The Association of Educational Office Employees-Los Angeles Unified School District's (AEOE-LAUSD) Board of Directors attended their annual National Professional Development Conference July 11-20 in Boise, Idaho. AEOE-LAUSD can be accessed via the Internet at www.aeoe-lausd.org

LAUSD, Wells Fargo Team Up to Help Overcome Budget Deficit

Wells Fargo has announced an innovative program to help financially support public schools in Los Angeles, as well as those in two Southland counties facing unprecedented budget shortfalls. The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), which faces $380 million in budget cuts for the 2003-2004 school year, is supporting the program.

Through the Team Up for Our Schools program, for every new Wells Fargo consumer checking account opened between June 2 and Aug. 31, up to $20 will be donated by Wells Fargo to school districts in Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. The district where the Wells Fargo store is located will receive $10 for every new Wells Fargo consumer checking account opened and an additional $10 when new and existing banking customers sign up and use Wells Fargo Bill Pay, a service to pay bills online. The program will be available in all 224 stores in the three-county area.

Already, Wells Fargo has raised $71,000 for the LAUSD.

The LAUSD, the largest district in the three-county area and the second largest in the country, and other school districts throughout California, are grappling with a proposed $1.5 billion budget cut in education funding this coming school year.

"School funding cutbacks will have a dramatic impact on our district this fall. With public dollars at a premium, we welcome the commitment of corporate leaders like Wells Fargo to help generate new and innovative sources of funding to help keep Los Angeles schools in business," said LAUSD Superintendent Roy Romer.

"Like many in the community, Wells Fargo is acutely aware of the enormous challenges our public schools face given current budget cuts," said Shelley Freeman, Los Angeles Regional Community Banking President. "The Wells Fargo Team Up for Our Schools program was created to give our community, our customers and our team members a chance to become part of the solution. Together, it's one more way that we can help make sure students receive the best possible education."

In addition, Wells Fargo will host a series of Banking on Our Future financial literacy workshops in Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara counties in July to help children and adults learn about the basics of banking. The company developed Banking on Our Future in partnership with Operation HOPE, a nonprofit organization dedicated to revitalization of underserved communities through financial literacy. In the past three years alone, Wells Fargo contributed more than $60 million to schools and educational programs across the country.

LAUSD is the second largest school system in the country, serving more than 746,000 kindergarten-12th grade students. In the past three years the District has made significant improvements in student achievement, raising student test scores at a faster rate than the State. Although the District faces a difficult budget year in 2003-04, instructional reforms will be protected and advanced.

Wells Fargo & Company is a diversified financial services company with $370 billion in assets, providing banking, insurance, wealth management and estate planning, investments, mortgage and consumer finance from more than 5,800 stores and the Internet (www.wellsfargo.com) across North America and elsewhere internationally.

July Calendar Of Events

7
through August 15
LAUSD Summer School

22
Board of Education Meeting
LAUSD Headquarters
(Board Room)
333 S. Beaudry Ave.
Downtown Los Angeles
1 p.m.

Board of Education Summer Break (No Board Meeting Scheduled) July 23-August 25

Dates, times are subject to change

People

Dr. Timothy Miller, director of Middle Schools, Local District G, is the 2003 recipient of the Diane E. Watson Award. The award is presented by the Council of Black Administrators (COBA) annually to the educator who exemplifies excellence educational leadership and creative community service.

Dr. Miller has served as dean, assistant principal, SSS, assistance principal and principal. Bancroft Middle School, Dr. Miller's former school, was recognized by the state for academic excellence under his leadership. As director of Middle Schools for Local District G, Dr. Miller supervises a combination of middle schools, Span Schools and Special Education Schools.

Herchel Sarnoff, a world history, US history and geography teacher at Jordan High School, has been selected for the ABC-CLIO Schools History Fellowship Program. ABC-CLIO Schools is a leading history reference and curriculum publisher for grades 6-12. The program provides opportunitites for advanced study and collaboration to exceptional secondary social studies teachers.

Teachers Needed as Evaluators

Teachers currently teaching the courses listed below are invited to serve on committees to evaluate instructional materials and make recommendations for the Board's adoption. The textbook evaluation committees will meet from October through December 2003 for an average of two days per committee.

Representation from each local district is needed and will be a consideration in the selection of the committee.

FINE ARTS
Drama AB, Grades 9-12
Drama Middle School AB, Grades 6-8
Drama Laboratory, Grades 7-8

SCIENCE
Integrated/Coordinated Science 1AB, 2AB, Grades 9-12
Integrated/Coordinated Science 3AB, Grades 11-12

WORLD LANGUAGES
French, Grades 9-12
Italian, Grades 9-12
Japanese, Grades 9-12
Spanish, Grades 9-12

For additional information, call Beverly Edwards or Virginia Freedman, Textbook Services at (213) 207-2280.

Employee Recreation

Cellular Phone Offers
Verizon Wireless
For more information, call (213) 700-6789

Employee Discount Tickets
Hurricane Harbor, Knott's Berry Farm, Legoland, Long Beach Aquarium, Raging Waters, Six Flags Magic Mountain, Sea World, Soak City and Universal Studios Hollywood

AMC/Edwards/Mann/Pacific/Regal Cinemas/United Artists Theatre Tickets
$5 AMC, Pacific Theaters, $6 Mann Theaters, $7 Edwards, Regal Cinemas
Limit 10 per person. Tickets available at three locations:

600 E. Pico Blvd., L.A.
(213) 743-3679
Monday-Friday, 11 a.m.- 5 p.m.

5607 Capistrano Ave., Room 26, Woodland Hills
(818) 904-2084
Monday-Friday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Beaudry Building, 14th Floor, Reception Area
333 S. Beaudry Ave., downtown L.A.
Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Cash, cashiers checks or postal money orders are accepted, payable to: Auxiliary Services Trust Fund. NO PERSONAL CHECKS OR CREDIT CARDS. All sales are final. NO refunds or exchanges. MAIL ORDERS ARE NO LONGER ACCEPTED.

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News from our Local Districts

District B

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This past spring, Local District B parents participated in two dynamic conferences: The Second Annual Gifted/Talented Parent Conference and a Leadership Parent Conference with Dr. Joyce Epstein from Johns Hopkins University.

Nearly 300 parents gathered for the May 31st GATE Parent Conference, "Embrace the Gift: Awaken and Inspire the Gifted Mind" at San Fernando Middle School. This event's theme and content were collaboratively developed by parents, administrators and Local District B GATE coordinators.

Workshops included "High School English in the Highly Gifted Classroom," "Growing Up Gifted," "Preparing for Advanced Placement Classes" and "Testing for Giftedness." Parents received a clearer understanding of how to motivate and support gifted and highly gifted students.

Creating effective parent community partnerships was the focus of school teams at the Local District B Spring Leadership Conference led by Dr. Joyce Epstein, a national authority on parental involvement and director of the National Center from Johns Hopkins University.

More than 300 principals, teachers, parents and parent center directors in school teams attended the May 20th conference. At that meeting, Dr. Epstein presented her research showing that effective parent involvement in any single aspect of the educational process leads to measurable success.

Dr. Maureen Neihart addressed approximately 300 parents at the Local District B's Second Annual Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Parent Conference.

Dr. Epstein discussed six types of parent involvement partnerships-parenting, communicating, volunteering, home learning, decision-making and community collaboration. School teams left the conference with action plans ready to integrate the six types of parent partnerships designed to improve parent involvement linked to student success.

District C

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Summer in Local District C means a busy schedule for staff. Aside from the operation of year-round schools, planning for the new school year will be intensive. A series of three Principals' Institutes will provide a foundation for implementing English language arts, science and mathematics initiatives.

Administrators and teachers will be involved in an expanded character education and positive youth development training program with an emphasis on the secondary level schools. Coaches, math and science teachers will be involved in on-gong training around the new instructional initiatives including the new mathematics assessment and local district C algebra initiative.

At the same time, the business community, staff and principals will design a new vocation/technology master plan for all secondary schools. The Van Nuys community of schools is organizing an education master plan with administrators, teachers and the community. The Van Nuys design will rethink the configuration of each school and emphasize smaller learning communities.

A series of 10-15 Parent Institutes is being planned for the new school year and will address topics such as college planning, gifted and talented education and programs for students with disabilities. Staff also will train parents to work with college and career-bound secondary level students as part of the Local District C college bound and post-secondary commitment programs.

A new English language development program addressing the needs of students awaiting reclassification will involve intensive training this summer for secondary teachers. This program will be an important part of the secondary literacy cadre training that's scheduled to take place.

District D

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As a new Passport offering this year, Local District D has instituted Grade Level Support Networks. More than 70 teachers engaged in lively discussion and planning sessions that deepened their understanding of the Open Court Reading system and the research that supports it.

The networks were open to all teachers. Salary point credit or Passport hours were available to participants.

Literacy coaches have facilitated the bi-weekly sessions, which explored a variety of issues of interest to the teachers including writing, research, comprehension and vocabulary development. Third grade teacher Katie Sherry shared her view of the experience. "I enjoyed bouncing ideas off other teachers about the different units," she said. "Last year was all about learning the program. Having the opportunity this year to talk with teachers allowed us to be more creative, broadened our minds and made it more concrete as well."

This is the first year a Passport specifically for Special Education teachers was organized. A dedicated group of resource and special day class teachers joined Joy Hartnett (literacy coach from Westminster) and Joe Vanden Bussche (resource teacher from West Hollywood) who facilitated the group. "We feel it is important to provide an avenue for special education teachers to meet with colleagues as they are often teaching multiple grade levels and may be the only special education teacher at a school. It helps reduce the isolation they sometimes feel," Hartnett said.

More than 70 teachers from Local District D engaged in discussions and planning sessions to deepen their understanding of the LAUSD's Open Court Reading system.

Nicole Delaney, a second grade facilitator, said "It was a great opportunity to get new approaches, test new ideas and do comprehensive planning with colleagues." Local District D will continue offering professional development designed to meet the varied needs of its teachers.

News from our Local Districts

District E

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Several Local District E students earned recognition this year in the Sixth Annual Neutrogena FACES Program.

In partnership with the Light Bringer Project of Pasadena, classes and workshops were offered to LAUSD art teachers who helped their students create art work reflecting issues of importance in their lives. The focus of the program was craft and folk art. In addition, students were asked to design dolls and puppets that incorporated both personal and universal symbols of expression.

The student projects were first exhibited at the Neutrogena Corporation offices and judged by both Neutrogena employees, who voted on the "Employees Choice Awards," and an official panel of judges for recognition and scholarships.

Several students from Local District E designed dolls and puppets for competition in the Sixth Annual Neutrogena FACES Program.

The artwork was then moved to the Los Angeles Craft and Folk Art Museum (CAFAM), which generously displayed the student artwork for an exhibition and hosted a culminating event that included an evening reception and gallery display on June 10.

Many LAUSD students distinguished themselves, earning both honors and awards. Among those honored were the following Local District E students, all members of art teacher Shelley Heffler's classes at Marshall High School:

Best Written Expression
Vanessa Hernandez
Honorable Mention High School
Knarik Boyadzhyan
Vanessa Hernandez
Artem Panchenko

Congratulations to all those students who participated in the Neutrogena FACES Program this year for your achievement in art and for your excellence in expression.

District F

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"What better way to celebrate life than through the arts" this evening demonstrates how arts enhance our lives and spirits," proclaimed Richard A. Alonzo, Local District F Superintendent, upon welcoming students, parents and teachers to the Local District F Arts Festivals.

This Belmont and Wilson Families of Schools celebrate the arts in grand style with two evenings of music, dance, theatre and art. On June 5, the Wilson School Family enjoyed its third annual Arts Festival at El Sereno Middle School. The following evening, Virgil Middle School hosted the Belmont School Family's first annual Arts Festival.

Both evenings highlighted the dynamic, creative endeavors of visual and performing arts instruction from kindergarten through 12th grade. To catch a glimpse, and view student art samples showcased in the gallery. Visit the Local District F website, **http://district-f.lausd.k12.ca.us/egallery/index.html**.

Students showcased their talent by participating in the Local District F Arts Festivals.

News from our Local Districts

District G

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On May 1, Renee Jackson, Local District G superintendent, paid a visit to Horace Mann Middle School to see a special young man that she first saw during the 2001-2002 school year.

Keshawn Cooper, a seventh grader, arrived on campus and was immediately summoned to the principal's office. Since the principal had contacted his home the night before, he was sure that he was in trouble. He was late for an important event.

As he entered the office, he had a puzzled look on his face. He walked right into the superintendent. Surprise! She was going to shadow him as he went through his daily routine as a student at Horace Mann Middle School. She was going to class with him.

After a brief session to check up on his progress since her last visit, Ms. Jackson accompanied him to class and nutrition.

Few of the students and staff at Mann Middle School were aware that Ms. Jackson had an important meeting/retreat to attend, but she wanted to keep her promise to Keshawn. She stayed longer than she had planned. She is always trying to make a difference in the life of a child.

While on campus, Ms. Jackson "adopted" another student Daton Harris. As a result, Daton began to improve both socially and academically. Such acts are a regular part of the superintendent's mission.

Local District G Superintendent Renee Jackson sits in the back of a class at Horace Mann Middle School where she recently observed and shadowed Keshawn Cooper, at left, wearing a blue jacket. Keshawn is a seventh grader at the school.

District H

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The Roosevelt School Family, in partnership with the Boyle Heights Learning Collaborative, recently hosted a "Feria del Libro" family event at Roosevelt High School. This free event celebrated the year-long community effort and commitment to the Million Word Reading Campaign in which students in grades pre-K to 12 pledged to read one million words this past school year.

A Million Word Reader Wall was unveiled and on display during the event. At the close of the program, top readers were recognized and art poster contest winners collected their prizes.

Approximately 5,000 people attended the celebration on June 7. In addition, thousands of donated books were given away. Guest readers included author Rene Colato; Rowena Lagrosa, Local District H superintendent; and teachers Ruth Brodsley, Linda Zupan, Rena Bodillo and Yolanda Perez.

Attendees enjoyed student performances by the Hollenbeck Middle School Salsa Dancers, Euclid Avenue Drill Team, First Street Drill Team and the Bridge Street students who performed a play, "Wolf!"

Participating authors included Victor Villasenor, Rain of Gold; Luis Rodriguez, Always Running; Carmen Tafolla, Sonnets and Salsa; Amada Irma Perez, Buy My Very Own Room; and Honorio Robledo, Nico Visits the Moon.

Renown filmmaker Severo Perez, director of the film "y no se lo tragó la tierra," an adaptation of Tomas Rivera's novel, presented a special screening of his award-winning film.

Children listened intently as a guest reader shared a book with them at the "Feria del Libro" celebration recently held at Roosevelt High School.

District I

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On May 28, Locke High School's Science Department hosted its first annual science fair. Students from each of the teachers' science classes presented their projects to a large turnout of parents, community members and staff from Locke and Local District I.

The event was the culmination of several months of standards-based teaching and learning by students and their teachers.

Students presented their work on poster boards and provided verbal explanations to the judges and attendees of the concepts demonstrated in their projects. The explanations revealed the students' high levels of engagement and depth of understanding as the judges probed for conceptual and procedural knowledge.

The range of projects spanned all the disciplines of life and earth sciences, as well as the physical and environmental sciences. Participants included students in biology, advanced physical science, chemistry and physics.

The event also provided clear evidence of students' response to the school's increased emphasis on science at Locke High School. The efforts of the science department were led by chairperson Vanessa Morris, Assistant Principal Jeanette Burns and Principal Dr. Loreather Garrett. The fair is one of several strides being made at Locke High School to provide a pathway of courses that will lead students to college and other post-secondary opportunities.

A student participating in Locke High School's first annual science fair presented her project and concept as others observed.

News from our Local Districts

District J

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First Lady Laura Bush came to Vernon City Elementary School in District J last month to present the school with the first grant money in the nation awarded from the Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries Grant to purchase library books.

Mrs. Bush told the students, staff, parents and guests that their school library was selected from a list of 6,000 libraries to receive the first award. She said many people helped to raise money for the Foundation because "we all know that libraries are necessary to help students learn to read and do well in school."

Mrs. Bush brought along a copy of Tomas and the Library Lady to add to the school's library collection. The book is a true story of the experiences of the author, Tomas Rivera, the first Hispanic president of the University of California. The story is about how a librarian opened up the world of books to Tomas Rivera, and how he taught the librarian Spanish.

Mrs. Bush said, "Tomas Rivera's life teaches us an important lesson. The more you read, the more you learn and the more opportunity you will have in life." She added that "reading and doing well in school can help you to become president of a university, or even president of the United States."

Local District J Superintendent Dale Vigil said, "It was an honor to have Mrs. Bush present the first of 132 grants nationwide to Vernon City Elementary School. Access to quality literature is so important for our students," he said. "We are delighted that Vernon City has this wonderful opportunity to add to the school's library collection."

First Lady Laura Bush, center, presented a grant money award from the Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries Grant, which will be used to purchase library books. Vernon City Elementary School was chosen from 6,000 school libraries to receive the first award.

District K

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In June, 300 fifth graders from Wilmington Park, Fries, Gulf, Broad and Hawaiian elementary schools embarked on a journey to discover the luxury, history and tragedy of the world's most famous ocean liner at the California Science Center's Titanic: The Artifacts Exhibit.

The field trips and transportation, sponsored by Comcast as part of its community outreach "Reading Rewards" program, came about through the vision and efforts of Debi Picciolo, senior vice-president of Southern California, and Patti Rockenwagner, executive director of Corporate Communications.

Javier Sandoval, Local District K director of Instruction, and Gary Cox, Comcast Original Programming, worked closely with the schools and facilitated a high level of coordination that allowed the kids to get on the road much faster then anyone initially expected. Most of the students had never visited the California Science Center before and the Titanic exhibit was an exciting introduction to the hands-on educational center.

The tour began with a visit to a meticulously recreated interior deck. Students carried boarding passes with the names of actual Titanic voyagers, while other "passengers" in period dress relayed tales from the famous vessel's brief but captivating history. The Grand Staircase, an impressive reproduction that gave insight to the ship's true size and magnificence, caused murmurs of "wow," and "cool" to ripple through the group.

Two passenger cabins, one for those traveling first class, one for those crammed into third, starkly illustrated the chasm that separated the wealthy travelers from the less fortunate. None of the kids had trouble identifying the accommodations they would have preferred. As the tour concluded, all the children received "Reading Rewards" bookmarks to commemorate their achievements and serve as a happy reminder of the day.

"Comcast was happy to send these Wilmington elementary school kids to the Titanic exhibit," said Cox. "I'm sure the exhibit will have a long lasting cultural effect on them and Comcast was pleased to be a part of their experience."

Students from several Local District K elementary schools showed their appreciation to Comcast, which sponsored a field trip and transportation for students to the California Science Center's: Titanic: The Artifacts Exhibit.