

SANTA CLARITA STAR

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SPRING 2009

SANTA CLARITA VALLEY TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

CTA Meets with Assemblyman Smyth

Teacher leaders met with Cameron Smyth to address their concerns because area school districts are looking at devastating budget cuts. Smyth said he would work with his colleagues to try to pass common-sense reforms proposed by Republicans to promote more job creation in our state, give schools more freedom and flexibility to invest in the classroom, ensure our tax dollars are spent as wisely and efficiently as possible, and fix our broken budget system to help the state live within its means.

Smyth responded: "We must implement long-term, meaningful reforms to help California operate more efficiently and effectively. These include a constitutional spending limit and a strong 'rainy



From left: CTA Executive Director Laura Terman, SCVTA Emeritus Orval Garrison, 38th District Assemblyman Cameron Smyth, and SCVTA Chair Joan Oxman

day' fund, forcing the Legislature to live within its means, and stopping the gross overspending that has contributed significantly to our budget deficit. These structural re-

forms, along with an economic recovery plan that encourages investment and promotes job creation, are key components of any workable budget solution."

CTA President, Board Member Spend a Day in Newhall



On Jan. 28, David Sanchez, President of the California Teachers Association, and Bonnie Shatun, a CTA Board Member, spent the day with administrators, teachers, and School Board members of the Newhall School District. They toured four schools, McGrath, Newhall, Meadows, and Stevenson Ranch, where the principals at each site warmly greeted them. Both guests commented throughout the day how impressed they were with the positive relationships they observed among district administrators, school board members, and teachers, as well as the exceptional schools they visited which are a snapshot of all the great things happening in all the schools in the Newhall School District. Pictured, from left to right: Bonnie Shatun, Patricia Porter, Carole Magnuson, Melanie Musella, Candice Fleece, Brett Raffish, David Sanchez, Dr. Marc Winger, Suzan Solomon, Mike Shapiro.

Santa Clarita Valley Teachers Association Sponsors STRS Retirement Workshop

Teachers packed the offices of the Santa Clarita Teachers Association in December to gain valuable information regarding retirement options. Denny Thompson, a retired teacher and State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) speaker, held everyone's attention as he discussed the important steps teachers should take to protect their future as they advance through their career.

Anyone who has been a member of STRS for five years is considered vested. Teachers who are further along in their careers should consider scheduling a personal, free consultation interview with an STRS expert, who can assist teachers with their particular situations, since all situations are different. For more information regarding STRS and to download the latest member handbook, please log on and create an account at www.calstrs.com

CHAPTER ROUNDUPS

Hart Roundup

The Association presented its bargaining proposal for the 2008–09 school year to the district in November. Since this is the final year of a three-year contract, only three areas could be proposed beyond salary and benefits. The proposal included changing the remedy if class size limits were exceeded, changing personal necessity/sick leave options for those members adopting children, and bringing all certificated stipends offered by the district into the collective bargaining agreement. Benefits were to remain unchanged and the Association reserved the right to reopen on salary 30 days after the state budget was signed.

The MOU, negotiated last spring, is set to expire at the end of this school year. In the time that has passed, the state budget situation has not improved and, in fact has gotten worse so it is very likely that another MOU will have to be negotiated to address the budget shortfall facing the district in the next couple of years.

While a lot of the focus in the fall was on national and state issues for the November general election, it is important to note that the HDTA endorsed Hart District school bond, Measure SA, passed. With its passage, modernization projects will continue and a new high school will be built in the Castaic area.

Castaic

The Castaic School District has many teachers who have won grants and well-deserved awards. The California League of Middle Schools named Matt Gilpin, who teaches fourth grade at Live Oak, Teacher of the Year. Beth Wood, also a teacher at Live Oak, was awarded a grant from Target to pay for buses for a field trip to the Ronald Reagan Library. Ruth Anne Murthy, who teaches at Northlake Hills Elementary, was awarded a grant for art supplies as well as a grant from Target to pay for field trips.

Castaic Teachers' Association has a website up and running at www.castaicteachers.org. Members can access the site to find answers to many of their questions. There will soon be a bulletin board for members to exchange ideas and opinions on calendar issues. The calendar has become a much-discussed topic and our association is in the process of voting on calendar options.

Castaic Middle school administrators are surveying teacher's "average weekly homework amounts" in response to questions and concerns raised by the School Board. Castaic Elementary recently hosted a "Dads at School" event. An intervention after school program will begin in February. Teachers will teach this program and the focus is Math

facts and problem solving and reading fluency and comprehension. Live Oak School is turns 20 on Monday! Their annual Founder's Day celebration next month will include a talent show. Students will begin a Read-A-Thon next week.

Northlake staff and students enjoyed a two-week vacation and returned to a busy schedule. Responsibility is being emphasized school wide as the new character counts trait. A fun and interactive assembly was held to introduce ideas for our first science fair, which will be held in March and the after-school homework club continues for struggling students in the third, fourth and fifth grades. Our new ELAC committee hosted evening meetings in December and January for the parents of our English learners. The 5th grade enjoyed learning about colonial America and presented an elaborate Colonial Fair full of fun learning activities. Along with SB472 Math training, various meetings, planning, grading and budgetary worries, we took time to watch the historic presidential inauguration of Barack Obama. Northlake Hills is looking forward to a good 2009!

Newhall

Six Newhall District schools have been selected for the 2008 Honor Roll by California Business for Education Excellence (CBEE) and Just for the Kids-California (JFTK-CA) as part of the 911 California public schools selected. McGrath and Wiley Canyon schools were recognized as CBEE Star Schools that have significant populations of socio-economically disadvantaged students who have shown significant increases in grade-level proficiency over four years for all subgroups. Oak Hills, Pico Canyon, Stevenson Ranch, and Valencia Valley schools were recognized as CBEE Scholar schools that have shown significant levels of academic achievement but do not have a socio-economically disadvantaged student population. Congratulations to all the teachers, principals, and support staff for this recognition!

McGrath Elementary has also been named a California Title I Achieving School for the second year in a row. McGrath's API grew by over 50 points over the last year and is now at 833, quite an achievement for a school with a population with so many unique needs, such as a high level of poverty, transience, and EL learners. Double congratulations to the staff at McGrath for their achievements.

Oak Hills Elementary had their third annual Spelling Bee on Feb. 2. Principal Wayne Abruzzo thanked his upper-grade teachers for their support of the spelling bee. The plan is to select the three top spellers from Oak Hills to go to the regional competition. He also

thanked his PTA for the jog-a-thon event which raised over \$50,000 in donations from the community which will be used to buy additional technology, do some landscaping, and provide quality programs for the students at Oak Hills.

At Newhall Elementary, Ethel Carleton, Science Fair Coordinator for the past 14 years, has enlisted the support of a professional criminologist for the upcoming school science fair. Kelly Enos, Director of the Administration of Justice program at Mission College, gave a presentation in the school's new science laboratory on forensic science as it supports evidence gathering in criminal investigations. His goal was to introduce students to the subject made popular by the television series "CSI" for application to science fair experiments and projects. He has agreed to provide fingerprinting materials used by the FBI and shoe and tire print casting materials for student experiment use. He has also volunteered to assist interested students in the development of experiments that will be entered in this year's science fair. Based on the level of enthusiasm, Ethel Carleton anticipates some of these experiments may advance to the Los Angeles County Level.

Staff at Peachland Elementary are fortunate to have two key GLAD trainers on staff who offer unit and lesson plans, provide individual and grade level GLAD strategy planning, and lead demo lessons in the classrooms. Peachland GATE students have teamed up with Placerita Nature Center and Ranger Frank to have him provide seven lessons for them, culminating with a trip to the Center. Newhall and Peachland have partnered for much of the planning and activities.

Saugus

Congratulations to all of our teacher honorees who will be participating in the Teacher Tribute Dinner. We are so very proud of our teachers!

In response to teacher concerns, the Saugus Union School District formed a Paper Reduction and Work Efficiency Taskforce to work with our association. One important goal is in the process of being met. We are developing online report card comments with automatic Spanish translations. The new comments should be completed in time for teachers to prepare the next round of report cards.

Teachers are extremely concerned about the State Budget and all of the possible repercussions to our district. We greatly appreciate the efforts of Dr. Fish and the SUSD Board for working with us to keep the lines of communications open. We know how important it is for

See **ROUNDUPS**, page 3

TURN Update

Santa Clarita Valley teachers were well represented at the January meeting of the Teacher Union Reform Network, where Richard M. Ingersoll, PhD, from the University of Pennsylvania lectured on the topic, "Short on Power, Long on Responsibility" and its effect on teachers. It came as no surprise to teacher leaders in attendance that teacher-directed schools have less turnover and higher morale, and demonstrate better results for students than do schools where teachers have little say. Teacher empowerment and teacher leadership are essential for school improvement.

For more information, read Richard M. Ingersoll's research-based book, "Who Controls Teachers' Work, Power and Accountability in America's Schools." (Harvard University Press).

Roundups

FROM PAGE 2

all of us to work together in these difficult times.

Once again we must unite our valley and send the message to our legislators and the State of California that our students require their support in order to insure a promising future. We must leave no stone unturned as we work to preserve the quality of education for our students while preserving the working conditions, salary, jobs, and benefits for our staff.

Sulphur Springs

Like most of you, I'm struggling to find a ray of sunshine in California's budget crisis. We in Sulphur Springs are trying to focus on helping parents understand that the crisis in education will not go away, that there is no easy fix this time. The difficult decisions that the Board of Trustees must make are due to the budget crisis in California alone.

SSDTA, The District Office, and Board of Trustees have made it a priority to educate both employees and parents on the severity of the crisis and the repercussions that it is causing, through site meetings, PTA presentations, and the District Conference. In an effort to help lessen the effect the

budget crisis will have on children, the district is offering a one-time early retirement package that will be in addition to the State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) program.

There are still questions about "if this happens or that happens" at this writing. If there is flexibility on class size reduction which would allow more students in grades K-3, cuts will not be as painful to students. If the Federal Bailout for Education includes additional money owed for IDEA and Title One and that money goes directly to school districts, the encroachment into the general fund will be less and children will reap the benefits. If nothing happens, one of the biggest cuts could be in home-to-school transportation, which will have an impact on ADA and cost students future field trips. Desperate times call for desperate measures, and you will be asked for your input and quite possibly School Board meeting attendance along the way.

There is a ray of sunshine for some students, however. The winning authors of the SSDTA Creative Writing Contest will be presented with a \$100 savings bond at the School Board Meeting at Canyon Springs on Feb. 25.

Thank you for making time to attend the different information meetings and for your thoughtful questions.



(From left) Patty Fitzpatrick, Suzanne Graff, Joan Oxman, Carole Magnuson, Leslie Littman

Santa Clarita Valley Teachers Association

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The Santa Clarita Star is published by the Santa Clarita Valley Teachers Association. The SCVTA represents employees of the Castaic, Hart, Newhall, Saugus and Sulphur Springs school districts. The SCVTA is affiliated with the California Teachers Association and National Education Association. For more information, call (661) 255-0311, or write us at California Teachers Association, 26111 Bouquet Canyon Road Suite H-5, Santa Clarita, CA 91350.

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