

Pendleton Post

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Reaching For Polaris: “Wishing Upon a Star that My Dad Will Come Home Soon” ...

by Maria Swanson

“I wish my Dad wouldn’t deploy again”; “I wish my Dad would come home soon”; “I wish I could get a puppy” ... Those were some of the heartfelt wishes of 43 elementary school children at Temecula Luiseno on October 18, 2011, during Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), Tell-Me-A-Story (TMAS) literacy activity. Approximately, 75 Temecula Luiseno Elementary School family members, school administrators and volunteers attended an evening of appreciation and goodwill in honor of military families.

Last year, Principal Tim Dignan established a Military Family Appreciation Night as a way to honor military connected children and their families at his school. This year, his goal was to double the participation of military families; and to do so he reached out to the School Liaison Office at MCB Camp Pendleton for ideas. After a brief deliberation, it was easy for our office to come up with the suggestion to sponsor a TMAS activity at Temecula Luiseno since it is one of our favorite and most rewarding activities created by MCEC.

The evening was an outstanding example of how “team work” and excellence in collaboration among individuals and inter-agencies can yield an unforgettable experience to all. Before the scheduled event

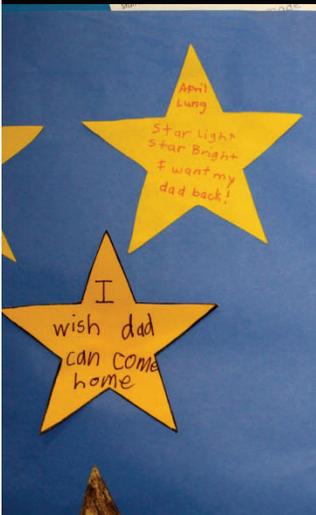
date, tireless coordination between the School Liaison office at Pendleton, the Temecula Luiseno Principal, Assistant Principal, USC, Master’s in Social Work intern Travis Riley, and school Parent Teacher Association (PTA), generated great results in identifying and informing military families of this special night of fun and recognition for their service and sacrifice. Principal Dignan’s desire to host a “bigger and better” spectacular military night was a wish come true when the school received twenty RSVPs to the TMAS event from military families. Our office sponsored the evening, by providing a free copy of the book “Night Catch” by Brenda Ehrmantraut to each military family in attendance.

The guest reader, Master Sergeant Trevor Rednour is twins David and Christian’s Dad and he will be deploying to Afghanistan early next year. MSgt Rednour twin sons, along with their Mom Angela and forty other attentive, very well behaved children, sat and listened while he read “Night Catch”. Night Catch is a story about a little boy and his Dad who is getting ready to deploy, and we had many children in the audience who identified with the theme as they had parents about to or already deployed. This story reminds us that even when many miles separate us, the things we do as families become our family story and keep us connected. Night Catch focuses on our individual family story and how those special stories help to connect us.

Three activities outlining the theme of the book followed the encore reading. The “make a wish”, shooting star image -

watercolor, and map activities were monitored by seven highly motivated, charismatic ROTC students from Great Oak High School, who served as facilitators and scribes, charming the children and adults alike. The “make a wish” activity generated some of the most poignant moments of the evening. Children were told to think about a wish they wanted and were given a yellow star to write their wish on. Their stars, encrypted with the most intimate and personal wishes such as: “I wish my Dad would come home soon”, were posted onto a blue paper bulletin board that created a visual emotional map of yearning for the deployed parent’s safe return home. This activity single-handedly, characterized the meaning and purpose of why we all came together to create a special night for military children on this unseasonably warm October night.

The smiles and gratitude of those military families attending, especially the children, brought an indescribable sense of validation and satisfaction to all of us involved in the planning and execution of TMAS at Temecula Luiseno. The mood in the Multi Purpose Room was one of joy, happiness, relaxation and appreciation. We’re looking forward to being back next year due to the popular demand of TMAS and hoping to recreate the same level of success with the help of additional volunteers. Until next year, I wish upon a star that all the children’s wishes will come true and that Polaris guides our entire nation’s service members home safe to their loved ones.



Santa Margarita Elementary School Reopens

by Rose Ingersoll

Camp Pendleton Base Commanding Officer Colonel Nicholas Marano and SgtMaj Ramona Cook were present for a special dedication as one of our Base schools reopens to families



and students. Community members gathered at Santa Margarita Elementary School which is located on Camp Pendleton to celebrate the grand re-dedication of the renovated school. Oceanside's elite included the Mayor, School Board Members, the district Superintendent, Members from the Bond Oversight Committee, the architect from the design team, Principal and fifth grade student ambassadors and a student Color Guard from El Camino High School JROTC.

Colonel Nicholas Marano accepted a plaque from Santa Margarita Elementary School student Grace Farmer during the re-dedication ceremony. The poised fifth grade student added "Thank you for helping us get money to buy 21 new computers through the Camp Pen recycling program." Colonel Marano graciously accepted the gift and gave thanks to the Oceanside School Board, the Citizens Oversight Committee and the voters of Oceanside for making it possible to renovate Santa Margarita Elementary School.

The school reopened for families on August 25th, 2011 after being closed for a year during renovation. The ceremony culminates a complex undertaking that required the citizens of Oceanside to vote for a bond to provide funding for renovation of several Oceanside District schools, including two on-base schools Santa Margarita Elementary School and North Terrace Elementary School. This community wide school bond vote obtained a 71% voter approval rating for the construction bond. The original Santa Margarita School was built in 1959 and in need of modernization for the 800 plus students currently enrolled.

Mr. Larry Perondi, the OUSD Superintendent spoke about the importance of educating and taking care of the children of our deployed service members.

Mr. Paul Gallegos, the architect whose vision transformed the dated school into the modern buildings that blend the natural environment with the pristine

new classrooms, to include sleek teaching walls and individual classroom sinks commented "We felt as though the military families deserved a school that would serve them well into the future. Our vision was for a contemporary interpretation of the classic little red school house, as reflected in the red siding and sloped roof entries. We also felt it was imperative that the school provide a comfortable and exciting learning environment for the children of Santa Margarita School." Mr. Gallegos presented Principal Ms. Pat Kurtz with a check for \$1,000.00 from the Alpha Studio Design Group at the conclusion of the ceremony.

Natural landscaping complements the school, with borders of indigenous grasses and flowers, while strategically placed river rock beds echo the paint pallet of the new buildings.

Fifth grade student Lily Andrade told the audience "This is the best school I've ever been to. Santa Margarita is the coolest school in Oceanside!"



Oceanside City Mayor Jim Wood poses with Principal Ms. Pat Kurtz and fifth grade student ambassadors.



JROTC Students from El Camino High School present the Color Guard ceremony. Cadet 1stLt Fermar Paulan, Cadet Sgt Angel Perez, Cadet SSgt Blue Leet, and Cadet 2ndLt Joshua Lopez.

Venerable Appreciation Luncheon by Maria Swanson

Banana pudding, meatloaf and ice tea, preceded a speech of appreciation by Colonel Nick Marano, Commanding Officer of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton aimed at local school district Superintendents and Principals. Colonel Marano stressed the important role local school officials play in supporting Camp Pendleton troop's mission readiness by guaranteeing a quality education for their children. He stated : "There is a strong correlation between mission readiness and quality of life for families back home; and children's education is a number one preoccupation for military families."

Camp Pendleton's traditional offering of the Base Commander's Appreciation Luncheon ensued about 1996 and its key goal at inception was the implementation of a two way communication, between the Base and school districts leadership. This Appreciation Luncheon began subsequent to Camp Pendleton's appointment of liaison representatives to the local school district Boards of Education for Oceanside Unified, Fallbrook Union Elemen-

tary, Fallbrook Union High, and later Capistrano Unified School District.

Later in this millennium, as the winds of war blew across Camp Pendleton, and the frequency and intensity of deployments affected the socio- emotional well being of military connected students, the partnership and open communication between Base and School Officials became even more important. A strong synergy between the Base and our many local school districts has become crucial in addressing demographics variance, Base housing occupancy rates, and cycles of deployment. Sustainable and reliable partnerships between Base and school officials assure strong support systems for military children and their families especially in this unpredictable economic atmosphere and wartime footing.

Through the years, the Base Commander's Luncheon has remained a predictable validation to the hard work and dedication of local Superintendents and Principals that work to ensure our military children



continue to strive academically and emotionally. The delightful storytelling and laughter shared by all invitees and Base officials over coffee and banana pudding was a sure sign that appreciation and a good meal can be the antidotes to relieve the anguish of challenging economic times.

MCB Camp Pendleton Base Commanding Officer Colonel Nicholas Marano and SgtMaj Ramona Cook pose with our Area Superintendents at the "O". From left to right Temecula Valley Unified School District Mr. Tim Ritter, Murrieta Valley Unified School District Dr. Stan Scheer, Fallbrook Union Elementary School District Ms. Candace Singh, Oceanside Unified School District Mr. Larry Perondi and Fallbrook Union High School District Dr. Dale Mitchell



Colonel Marano and SgtMaj Cook with our fabulous Principal's at the CO's luncheon. From left to right are Mr. Bill Billingsley, San Onofre School; Mr. Rod King, Fallbrook High School; Mr. George Duarte, San Clemente High School; Ms. Wendy Hill, Mary Fay Pendleton School; Ms. Pat Kurtz, Santa Margarita ES; Ms. Jill Davis, Stuart Mesa ES; Mr. Fausto Barragan Jr., North Terrace ES.



Parents - We would love to hear from you.

You can reach us at:
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www.marines.mil/unit/basecamp Pendleton/Pages/home.aspx



Camp Pen Students Perform Under Pressure by Rose Ingersoll

The results are in and they are outstanding! Last spring, students at the five schools aboard the installation took the CA Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) test. Each year the California Department of Education (CDE) provides Academic Performance Index (API) reports to our Local Educational Agencies (LEA). The CDE assigns a score to each school and district that is based on the academic performance of students taking statewide assessments across multiple grades and content areas. The API score is a number that ranges from a low 200 to a high 1000. The statewide performance target is 800. All five of the schools aboard Camp Pendleton continue to produce outstanding API scores.

Some say that our students are not fairing too well these days as they continue to deal with the stress of their parent's deployment to Iraq or

Afghanistan. Some say that our children are not thriving. I say congratulations on a job well done to the students and faculty from each of our installation schools for yet another year of excellent test scores.

The individual school report can be viewed using the provided link for that school.

OUSD
North Terrace Elementary School
API Score - 855
<http://api.cde.ca.gov/Acnt2011/2011GrowthSch.aspx?allcids=37735696038889>

Santa Margarita Elementary School
API Score - 825
<http://api.cde.ca.gov/Acnt2011/2011GrowthSch.aspx?allcids=37735696038913>

Stuart Mesa Elementary School
API Score - 845
<http://api.cde.ca.gov/Acnt2011/2011GrowthSch.aspx?allcids=37735696038913>

[Acnt2011/2011GrowthSch.aspx?allcids=37735696115299](http://api.cde.ca.gov/Acnt2011/2011GrowthSch.aspx?allcids=37735696115299)

FUESD
Mary Fay Pendleton School
API Score – 874
<http://api.cde.ca.gov/Acnt2011/2011GrowthSch.aspx?allcids=37681146038301>

San Onofre School
API Score – 862
<http://api.cde.ca.gov/Acnt2011/2011GrowthSch.aspx?allcids=37681146096515>

Despite the challenges that our military students contend with, and the financial woes that our schools are up against, academic success endures inside the classrooms of our Camp Pen schools.



The Camp Pen School Liaison Office wishes you and your families a joyful holiday season.

Respectfully,
Maria Swanson & Rose Ingersoll