

Partnership to build school in Africa launched for second year

Students and teachers at Mariners Christian School are not deterred in their goal to help their peers on the other side of the world. As of June 2016, they had collected \$25,000 for Christ the Center Ministries in Gulu, Uganda, to build two classrooms in their brand new middle school, as well as support their feeding program. In year two, their goal is to help build a chapel and auditorium as part of the new school in Africa.

Middle School Principal Heather Harrison is encouraged that this service project is continuing in its second year – prompted by the students themselves. Mrs. Harrison had met with the United States Directors for Christ the Center Ministries based in Uganda, and learned of their vision to provide educational opportunities for the very least in a third world area and the powerful mission of their faith-based organization. Harrison's original vision for this effort did not include two consecutive years of partnership.



The enthusiasm is just as strong among students and staff at MCS in this second year. To kick off the fundraising, MCS is hosted a "Lunch on the Lawn" event on Friday, September 23, where families were invited to join their students for lunch. Proceeds from the event will directly benefit the school in Gulu.

"This is a fantastic opportunity to continue teaching our students to look beyond their current 'world' and see how Christ's love through them can impact others," commented Head of School Troy Moore.

THINK Together Founder Randy Barth receives Mayor's Award

Costa Mesa Mayor Steve Mensinger presented the Mayor's Award to Randy Barth, the founder of THINK Together's Shalimar

Learning Center on Costa Mesa's Westside, which for 22 years has helped tutor and teach young students in this low income neighborhood.

"You made such a huge impact on so many people," Mayor Mensinger said as he presented the award at the City Council meeting Tuesday Sept. 20. "We are grateful as a city to have people like you who make a difference. You are a true community partner and we are proud to have you in Costa Mesa."

THINK Together, the largest nonprofit after school program in the state, began on Shalimar Drive back in 1994 in response to a gang shooting in the neighborhood where some of the local moms asked for a safe place for their kids to study afterschool.

Working with community moms, Catholic priest Jerome Karcher and members of the St. Andrews Presybyterian Church, Barth was able to secure a room in an apartment complex and THINK Together was born.

Today THINK Together serves several hundred thousand children in after school programs in Orange, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego counties as well as children in the Bay Area near San Jose. Barth announced Tuesday that his organization is beginning a capital campaign to build a new community center on Shalimar Drive.

"We appreciate the city's partnership through the years," Barth said. "It wasn't an easy project to get off the ground, but it's been, we think, mutually beneficial. We thank you for your leadership and support."

Operation Clean Slate founder given Mayor's Award

On Tuesday July 5, Mayor Steve Mensinger presented Michael Howard, the founder and executive director of Operation Clean Slate, with the Mayor's Award to recognize the work his nonprofit has done to deter youths from vandalizing property with graffiti by having them paint murals instead.

"For your years of service to this community, your extraordinary leadership, and your passion for working with youth and providing them with a positive outlet for their creativity, it is my honor and privilege to present you with the Mayor's Award," Mensinger said.

Based in Costa Mesa, Operation Clean Slate has partnered with over 25,000 volunteers and produced over 1,000 murals at more than 800 schools throughout Southern California and in six other countries.

Howard started the nonprofit back in 1993 as a solution to graffiti and vandalism while teaching at juvenile hall.

In Costa Mesa, Operation Clean Slate has painted more than 45 murals on 16 different school campuses, including Rea Elementary which now has five, They have also painted murals around town at Bark Park, Mesa Water District, Doria's Haus of Pizza and New Directions for Women.

"It's an honor and I'm really excited that the arts are being acknowledged," Howard said upon receiving the award. "It's great to have the community recognize what we are doing and we are going to keep doing it."

Mariners Christian School celebrates graduation of eighth-Grade Class

Earlier this week, Mariners Christian School held its graduation ceremony for the eighth-grade Class of 2016.

On Wednesday June 15, eighth-grade students, families, friends, and the entire MCS faculty and staff gathered in the beautiful sanctuary at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach.

The graduation ceremony was comprised of the presentation of diplomas, listening of music and keynote speakers, a slideshow of middle school memories, and the acknowledgement of key student accomplishments and leadership awards. Some program highlights included:

- Welcome by Head of School, Troy Moore
- Invocation by Student Council Vice President, Alexandra Ianni
- Student Welcome by Student Council Co-President, Caroline Brewster
- Worship music by MCS Student Worship Band
- Special Gift to 8th Grade Class, Middle School Principal, Heather Harrison

Sixty eight eighth-grade students received their diplomas.

Newport Harbor student and Daughter of CMPD Lieutenant Honored for Perfect ACT Score

Newport Harbor High School student, Baylee Bakkila, daughter of longtime Costa Mesa Police Lt. Victor Bakkila, was recently honored at the Newport-Mesa Unified School District (NMUSD) student award ceremony.

On June 7, more than 200 guests attended the awards ceremony at the Corona Del Mar High School Performing Arts Center where among the 1,669 seniors graduating later this month, a few standout students were recognized. The areas of recognition included:

- Perfect ACT/SAT scores
- Simon Scholar designation
- Seals of Excellence

Bakkila was one of five students honored at the ceremony for a perfect ACT/SAT. Also recognized were:

- Shane Gooding of Corona Del Mar High School, Perfect score on ACT
- Matthew Paragas of Corona Del Mar High School, Perfect score on ACT
- Abigail Peterson of Corona Del Mar High School (class of 2017), Perfect score on ACT
- Hikaru Masuda of Corona Del Mar, Perfect score on SAT



In addition 17 students were recognized as part of the Simon Scholars Program and 12 students received the Seal of Excellence.

Simon Scholars allows students facing difficult life and economic circumstances to graduate from high school with enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence. Simon Scholars is a unique six-year program that begins during a student's junior year in high school and continues through four years of college.

Seal of Excellence honors students who took the most rigorous academic path. Qualifying students are designated as "AP Scholars", which is achieved when a student passes three or more Advanced Placement tests with a score of three or better.

These students will be honored with a special seal on their diploma, notation on their transcript and highlighted in the graduation program.



Mariners Christian School earns top accreditation

Mariners Christian School has earned the highest accreditation status, a six-year renewal from the dual accrediting organizations of Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

“Dual accreditation is often more difficult to achieve because there are broader and deeper evaluations of school performance, including a higher requirement for teacher and administrator training, and a detailed focus on biblical elements of instruction and organizational practice,” said Head of School Troy Moore. “When a school achieves dual accreditation, it has demonstrated its ability to meet

rigorous standards, both secular and biblical in nature.”

The entire accreditation process required two years of preparation, with Vice Principal Megan Shahabi leading the effort.

The visiting committee from ACSI/WASC, which included delegates from other private schools in the Southern California region, toured the school extensively in April, with a formal accreditation being granted on May 4.

Estancia High teacher and coach John Carpenter presented with Mayor’s Award

Longtime Costa Mesa resident John Carpenter, who is retiring this year after 38 years as both a teacher and coach at Estancia High School, was the recipient of the Mayor’s Award at the Tuesday May 17 City Council meeting.

“Tonight, we are honored to have long-time Costa Mesa resident John Carpenter here to receive the Mayor’s Award,” Mayor Steve Mensinger said. “John has touched the lives of many throughout this community, especially youth through his work as a teacher and coach at Estancia High School.”

Carpenter move to Costa Mesa from El Paso Texas when he was 10 and attended Sonora Elementary, Davis Jr High, Costa Mesa High School and Orange Coast College.

In high school he was an All-American swimmer and a starter on

the OCC National Champion Water Polo Team in 1972. In 1985, he was named Newport Beach Lifeguard of the year.

At Estancia, Carpenter spent his career both as the school's water polo and swim coach and also as a biology teacher, serving as the Science Department Chair.

"I'd like to thank Mayor Steve Mensinger for this outstanding and humbling honor, I am deeply touched by it," Carpenter said. "I'd also like to thank the City Council for all you do. I can't believe 38 years have gone by, it's been the most wonderful time in my life and it's going to be harder to leave it."

Newport-Mesa Recognizes Six High School Seniors for Character Traits

Newport-Mesa Unified School District (NMUSD) recognized and honored six high school seniors for their character and leadership traits.

"We have a wealth of incredible students and it is gratifying to annually recognize a few of them," said Superintendent Dr. Fred Navarro. "Getting to know students and their genuine good natured approach to life is something I look forward to each year," he added.

The Character Trait Award Programs aims to highlight six seniors, one from each high school, who symbolize one of the six pillars of character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

Staff members from the six NMUSD schools nominate a student for each category and the final award choices are decided on by a small committee steered by Superintendent Dr. Fred Navarro.

Kaitlynn Kistler, Early College High School – Trustworthiness

Selected for the Character Trait Award of Trustworthiness, Kaitlynn is a dedicated, thoughtful, and hardworking student. She is a member of the National Honors Society and dedicates her time to assist struggling classmates and goes above and beyond to offer her support.

Ryan Kassel, Corona del Mar High School – Respect

Selected for Character Trait Award for Respect, Ryan is unfailingly courteous, kind and respectful to his peers, teachers, and coaches. He is captain of the Varsity Cross Country team and participates as an intern in the Biorobotics Lab at UC Irvine.

Menzin Echols, Back Bay High School – Responsibility

Selected for the Character Trait Award for responsibility, Menzin has maintained excellent attendance, stellar grades, and earned the respect and friendship of his peers as well as the Back Bay faculty and staff.

Clarissa Barragan, Estancia High School – Fairness

Selected for the Character Trait Award for fairness, Clarissa is good-natured, open minded and patient. She is respectful toward peers and staff and carefully listens to others viewpoints to ensure fairness among peers.

Peyton Espley-Jones, Newport Harbor High School – Caring

Selected for the Character Trait Award for Caring, Peyton regularly displays a caring, positive, optimistic approach to things. She is personable, compassionate, and driven to succeed. She is president of a student body of more than 2,500 students and consistently spends time and energy to improve the lives of others through her genuine caring nature.

Nora Vartanian, Costa Mesa High School – Citizenship

Selected for the Character Trait Award of Citizenship, Nora maintains a 4.3 GPA, while balancing her academic activities and activities outside of school. She is a member of the Madrigal Choir and the varsity cheer team. She advocates for the needs of herself and others and is active in her church and numerous community service activities.

The winning high school seniors reflect strong leadership traits and exuberate kindness.

Winners are applauded with a six foot banner showcasing their photo, winning character trait and school they represent displayed in the district lobby for one year. Students will also be recognized at a special ceremony June 7, 2016 at 6 p.m. in the Corona del Mar High School Performing Arts Theater.

Costa Mesa performing arts students and fans enjoy sounds of newly donated piano

The sound of music in the Costa Mesa High School Performing Arts Center is now many octaves improved with the addition of a Yamaha C6 Grand Piano donated through the efforts of a prominent alumni, a local family and the school's foundation.

The piano was unveiled Tuesday night during a Costa Mesa High School Choir concert at the performing arts center.



Speaking to the concert crowd, Costa Mesa High School Foundation President and Councilmember Katrina Foley credited the school's music director Jon Lindfors for asking the foundation to purchase the piano that was sorely needed to enhance the school's musical performances.

"This year it is no surprise that the Costa Mesa High School Foundation awarded Mr. Lindfors with our first ever Visionary Award," Foley said. "It's through his vision that Costa Mesa High School breeds an environment of innovation, culture and creativity."

In addition to the foundation donation, the piano was made possible by a \$25,000 gift from Costa Mesa High class of 1992 alumnus Lane Merrifield and local residents Bob and Sue Denton.

Merrifield is notable for being the co-founder of Club Penguin, a hugely popular virtual online gaming site for

children.

“My Costa Mesa High School music and drama experiences were so critical to me during my time there,” Merrifield told Lindfors in a written note. “I am confident that without the artistic outlet and foundation in my life that you and others provide, I would not have enjoyed the success I have today.”

Costa Mesa High Principal Jacob Haley thanked the donors for the gift to the school.

“A piano such as this is a once in-a-lifetime purchase and will serve students and audiences to come for many decades,” Haley said.

SMART Camp is back for 2016

SMART Camp, which is a collaborative program between the City of Costa Mesa and the Newport-Mesa Unified School District, will be back again this summer. The free summer camp will be held Monday through Thursday July 5 – Aug. 4 on the campus of Costa Mesa High School.

The Sports Camp will include: Aquatics, basketball, cheer, football, soccer, softball, tennis, track, volleyball and wrestling. The Music Camp will include jazz band and orchestra lessons and the Arts Camp will include two and three dimensional visual art projects and theatrical acting.

A new acting component has been added to the Arts Camp as well.

In an effort to increase participation, organization and registration, this year's SMART Camp registration will be available online through the City's ActiveNet registration software as well as in person at City Hall, Balearic Community Center, Neighborhood Community Center, and Downtown Recreation Center.

Local students go behind the scenes at Youth in Government Day at Costa Mesa City Hall

About 80 students from Costa Mesa, Estancia, Newport Harbor and Early College high schools took over City Hall on Wednesday morning April 20 to take part in the inaugural Youth in Government Day.

The students got a behind the scenes look into how city government works, spending time with public services, police, fire, city administration, parks and community services and finance teams to learn the intricacies of the job.

The students were welcomed to City Hall by Mayor Steve Mensinger, Councilwoman Katrina Foley and City CEO Tom Hatch.

Mayor Mensinger talked to them about the importance of being a leader and how the city needs more people to step up into leadership roles.

"You being here today makes you a part of that group," he said. "We are looking forward to having you as future leaders."

Councilwoman Foley told the group how important it is to vote

and how much local government can change things.

“Costa Mesa City Hall is the place where you can effect the most change that you can see in your daily lives,” she said.

Next, CEO Hatch talked about the importance of local schools, which he called the “lifeblood of the community.” He also told the students how he was attracted to a career in government because it is a place where you can quickly solve problems.

After the morning welcome session, the students split up and spent time in their assigned groups where they learned about finance, policing, fire service, city administration and parks and recreation.

After an afternoon lunch, which included a presentation by County Registrar of Voters Neal Kelley, the students filed into the council chambers to hold a mock City Council meeting.

The council members included Mayor Maraide Green, of Estancia High School, Mayor Pro Tem Andrew Ghobrial, of Costa Mesa High School, Council Members Jennifer Contreras, of Costa Mesa High School and Council Members Roman Giglio and David Coreas from Early College High School.

Also on the dais were City CEO Catherine Pimentel from Costa Mesa High and City Attorney Julia Paluch from Estancia. Estancia’s Abby Dunham played the part of City Clerk and Tia Gordon of Costa Mesa was a staff presenter. Andrew Garcia of

Costa Mesa and Ulises Rodriguez from Early College were public commenters.

The mock council heard a presentation by Architect Steve Johnson of the firm Johnson Favaro regarding the plans for a new teen area in the city's soon to be re-built Donald Dungan library. After hearing the presentation and asking great questions, the council approved the plan 5-0.

Students get Immersed in Signature Academies

College Park Elementary School's Mandarin Immersion Program is accepting applications for the 2016-2017 school year. The program is available to kindergarten and first grade students who reside within the N-MUSD attendance boundaries. Enrollment is open district-wide and is not restricted to the College Park attendance zone.

Mandarin Chinese is the native language of more than 870 million people, making it the most widely spoken first language in the world. Kindergarten students currently in the program will transition to a Mandarin program in first grade, with the goal of continuing through middle and high school.

N-MUSD also offers two additional specialty elementary school programs – a Modern Scholars program at Adams Elementary and a Spanish bi-literacy program at Whittier Elementary. These programs are available for kindergarten students and first grade students (limited spaces available for first grade).

The District also offers Signature Academies at each high

school, offering students a global competitiveness to better prepare them for college and career success. Students enrolled in Signature Academies receive unique curriculum options and supplemental activities that complement the core academic programs at N-MUSD high schools.

Signature academies include specialty programs centered on key, industry leading careers and areas of study such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Arts and Math (STEAM). Each of the four N-MUSD High Schools offer unique programs, which are open to all ninth grade students within the N-MUSD, regardless of their zone of residence. [Click here for more information about the N-MUSD Signature Academies.](#)

The application deadline for elementary school specialty programs and the high school signature academies is Friday, April 15, 2016.