

# Excellence in Education

**EL SEGUNDO EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION PLEDGES TO GRANT \$450,000 TO EL SEGUNDO PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Provided by Linda Johnson

The El Segundo Educational Foundation (ESEF) announced a pledge to grant \$450,000 to support the El Segundo Unified School District (ESUSD) during the 2009-2010 academic year. Announcement of the *Fostering Excellence in Education* fundraising goal follows the successful completion of ESEF's 2008-2009 *Fostering Excellence in Education* campaign, which contributed \$450,000 to support technology, writing, music, physical education, and the robotics program.

Richard Lundquist, ESEF Chairman, presented a check to the ESUSD on September 22 and thanked the community, Corporate Partners, Superintendent's Roundtable members, Boost Your Schools contributors, and individual donors for their ongoing support in achieving the ESEF's fundraising goals. "California's schools are facing challenging times. Despite financial stress brought upon by the state's funding reductions, the students of the ESUSD continue to excel and receive a well-rounded education. This is due to the generosity of the corporations and the individuals in the community that support the Foundation." He also thanked the ESEF board members who share the community's commitment to El Segundo's schools. Throughout the year, corporate and community representatives on the ESEF Board of Directors are more than generous with their time and talent, as well as with their personal, professional, and business resources.

The ESEF's 2009-2010 *Fostering Excellence in Education* campaign will invest \$450,000 in programs that would not be possible without the supplemental grant.

This year's grant is earmarked for: The Robotics Program for students at both the middle and high school  
The Financial Literacy Course at the high school.

AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), a school-wide high school program designed to maximize students' academic potential.

Link Crew, a highly-defined and structured transitional leadership program that introduces incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders to exciting and purposeful activities and pairs them with well-trained upper class mentors.

The K-12 Music Program.  
Literacy Coaches serving students in K-5<sup>th</sup> grades providing intensive one-on-one and small group coaching, support, and instruction.  
PowerSchool and Infosnap technology programs.

The Physical Education Program at the elementary school level to help promote a healthy lifestyle.

Bridges to Partnerships, a program designed to partner directly with professionals in the community to bring their real-world expertise into the classroom and the curriculum.

The ESEF is proud to recognize the many awards bestowed on the schools. The State of California, Department of Education recently released the 2008 - 2009 Academic Performance Index (API) report. All ESUSD schools scores increased highlighting the excellence of the districts programs. Richmond Street and Center Street Elementary Schools were also recognized as California Distinguished Schools in 2008. Center Street also enjoyed the rare honor of being named a "Scholar Honor Roll School" in 2008, one of 697 schools in California to win this award from the California Business for Education Excellence and the Just for Kids - California. For more information on ESUSD visit the

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# Fleas Flee from Dog Park as Dog Beach Talks Reheat

By Brian Simon

It had to figure. When you combine warm weather and dozens of canines in one location, it's no surprise that fleas will eventually try to ruin the party. Such was the case at the popular El Segundo Dog Park. Though a haven for unleashed pooches (and their owners) to get some exercise and socialize, the park has also been a predictable breeding ground for those pesky blood-suckers who like to hop from host to host. "People have complained that there are a lot of fleas there," confirmed El Segundo Recreation and Parks Director Bob Cummings.

But thanks to the efforts of a local business and a non-profit organization, dog park visitors shouldn't be scratching anymore. A little over a month ago, staff from the Imperial Avenue-based self-service grooming spot The Pet Wash partnered with folks from Freeplay.org, an organization dedicated to finding new off-leash digs for dogs. The two groups donated their time and resources (at no cost to the City of El Segundo) to treat the park for fleas using beneficial nematodes--microscopic organisms that eat multiple species of nuisance insects. In addition to their yeoman work on fleas, the beneficial nematodes also do away with such troublesome pests as caterpillars, beetles and weevils. The method is completely organic, safe to dogs and humans, and environmentally responsible.

"We will try to apply the nematodes once every year, and this should protect the park from fleas and over 200 other destructive insects," said Freeplay CEO James Gross, whose organization is comprised of dog lovers from all over Los Angeles County. Originally established in 1996, Freeplay's mission, as noted on its website, is "to gain more off-leash access for dogs and their guardians to recreate." Instrumental in bringing Westminster Dog Park to Venice, the group recently renewed its earlier efforts to create a mile-long off-leash area between El Segundo and Playa del Rey at nearby Dockweiler State Beach. A petition posted online this past June now has 1,500 signatures supporting the idea, though another 7,000 or so names appear on some older paper petitions that go back a number of years. Freeplay first unveiled the Dockweiler proposal in 2000, four years after police began enforcing a county-wide ban on dogs at beaches.

Talk of a dog beach at Dockweiler is not news to El Segundoans. Before he completed his final term as the local mayor, the late Mike Gordon—a key figure in establishing El Segundo Dog Park eight years ago—hoped to build consensus for an off-leash zone at Dockweiler. Despite some degree of local support, the attempt ultimately failed. Dockweiler is owned by the State of California and managed by the County of Los Angeles, so the City of El Segundo

has no say in the matter. More importantly, several key players in the decision remain firmly against a dog beach, including County Supervisor Don Knabe and the Los Angeles County Department of Beaches and Harbors. Opponents cite concerns about health, safety and liability.

In researching potential off-leash sites, Freeplay determined that Dockweiler was the best overall candidate. Among the key arguments presented: the location is lightly used with large stretches of beach that are often completely empty due to proximity to the Hyperion plant and LAX; the size of the beach (over four miles long with ample width) would allow it to accommodate a dog run area while allowing competing uses elsewhere; the large open space and ample street and pay parking indicate that off-leash activists would find it appealing; lack of adjacent housing suggests minimal opposition from residents; and start-up fees would be relatively minimal since there is already existing fencing and a large number of trash cans.

"My goal is to gather as much support as possible through the petitions and the email form we have on our website," said Gross. "The form is then automatically sent to any City, County and State elected officials who have a say in the creation of an off-leash dog zone at Dockweiler."

Despite a groundswell of public support, Gross and company may have quite a mountain to climb persuading the powers that be. On his website, Supervisor Knabe explains the reasons for his opposition to the Dockweiler proposal by listing a wealth of issues brought up by the Los Angeles County Fire Department, Department of Beaches and Harbors, Department of Health Services, County Counsel, California Department of Parks and Recreation, and Heal the Bay. Dog bites, health and environmental impacts from canine waste, staffing challenges, and interference with beachgoer activities are just some of the concerns posted.

While unconvinced about Dockweiler's viability as a dog beach, Knabe emphasized that he has been a "long-time supporter of designated dog parks" and remains open to a future Freeplay proposal that can address the stated safety, health and liability issues. "The area that Freeplay would like to locate a dog beach had 1,506,900 beach visitors in 2006, with 310 rescues and 361 first aids performed by County Lifeguards," Knabe wrote on his website. "Thus, there is a greater potential of conflict between dogs, dog owners, County personnel, and the beach going public at Dockweiler than there is at other dog beaches."

Meanwhile, such conflict has been kept to

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