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Teacher of the Year Awards Given Out at School Board Meeting

By Jesse Blake McCann

The El Segundo Board of Education recognized the four recipients of the Teacher of the Year Award for the El Segundo Unified School District during its meeting. "I think it's a wonderful opportunity for everyone to recognize individuals who work day-in and day-out with the children in this community—and who are extraordinary examples [and] role models for all of us," Superintendent Geoff Yantz said.

The teachers at the four schools voted for one educator each to receive the prestigious award for the 2008/2009 school year. At the meeting, each school's principal came before the Board and praised the teacher being honored from their school. Afterwards, they presented each of the honorees with a plaque.

Given the nature of her family, it should come as no surprise that Donna Scaltrito is the Center Street Elementary School Teacher of the Year. She comes from a family of educators: her uncle was a superintendent of schools in Boston, her mother was a high school counselor, and she has a sister who is a teacher. "It's in the blood," Scaltrito said. "Can't help it."

Scaltrito grew up in Massachusetts. When she was 13 years old, she and her family moved to Palm Springs. In addition to a family background rich in education, she has extensive school training, resulting in two master's degrees, two teaching credentials, and a counseling credential. "And if I had the money, I'd go back to college and get some more," Scaltrito said. "I love school. I love learning."

And what made Scaltrito decide to become a teacher? "I always wanted to be a child psychologist," she said, "and in the classroom, I feel I can do more."

Scaltrito feels she can affect more children as a teacher and help them feel more self-confident and build their self-esteem. She has spent 11 of her 21 teaching years in El Segundo. She teaches third grade at Center Street. "El Segundo is a wonderful district," Scaltrito said, "It's so pro-children."

If you ask Center Street Elementary School Principal Marisa Janicek about Donna Scaltrito, she has a long list of positive things to say. "She's willing to help the students, parents and staff of the school," Janicek said. "She brightens up the campus."

The District picked Erin Goss when she was fresh out of college five years ago. Now at 28, the kindergarten instructor is the Richmond Street Elementary School Teacher of the Year. Goss grew up in Corona, California and went to a public school. She attended California State University Fullerton and received a bachelor's degree in sociology. She moved to Los Angeles with her husband and attended CSU Dominguez Hills, where she earned her teaching credential. After interviewing at a few school districts, El Segundo hired her. "I

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A Different Kind of Field Trip for Vistamar Students



Alina Heim, Jasmine Nyene, Hannah Anderson, Joseph Rosales, Michael Robinson with teacher Beth Jones. Photos by Beth Jones and Chris Kent.

NINE-DAY TRIP TO THE CZECH REPUBLIC

By Evan Ortega

Six students and their two teachers from Vistamar School were sitting on a riverbank in April, soaking up the scenery during their nine-day trip to the Czech Republic. It was on that riverbank, just an hour outside Prague, where during World War II, the prisoners of Terezin concentration camp were forced to dump the ashes of their families and friends from a nearby crematorium into the river.

"The river was very emotional for me because it was one of the most beautiful rivers I've ever seen in my life," Joseph Rosales, 16, said. "After hearing what happened later, it was kind of disheartening and kind of heartbreaking to really realize that the Nazis were able to take such beauty and destroy it."

The thoughtful moment at the river was one of many during for Rosales and his classmates, Jasmine Nyende, Alina Heim, Michael Robinson, Hannah Anderson, and Annie Currin. "It really gave me a lot to reflect on when I was sitting at the riverbank," Rosales said. "And it was really an emotional experience...it was very thought provoking."

Jasmine Nyende, 15, said she was moved by visiting the crematorium after learning how the Nazis had used children to dump the ashes. "It was a very different experience because we went to so many places where people died," she said. "We could kind of feel it... I was struck by everything that happened there... it kind of changed my life."

The Vistamar contingent was at Terezin to attend the 12th Annual International Festival of Tolerance. They met with roughly 45 students from counties including the Netherlands, Czech Republic, Austria and Sweden. Festival organizer Bev Meyer Zemo said the festival was an opportunity for students from different cultures and languages to come together and use art to communicate the meaning of their experience.

Originally a small town, the Nazis over-

hauled Terezin to turn it into a concentration camp. What made Terezin different from other concentration camps was its connection to the arts. Humanities teacher Beth Jones organized and chaperoned the trip with humanities teacher Chris Kent. She said the camp housed two categories of people. "One was the old and sick, and the second was artists, musicians, writers and politicians," Jones said. "So basically, Jewish community leaders; there were a lot of people there that were artistic in background."

The group toured the Magdeburg Barracks where artwork created by children and adults are displayed, including drawings, paintings, music and propaganda films. The prisoners would create propaganda during the day. At night and in their free time, they would create their own artwork, reflecting life in a concentration camp. "They wanted to use the camp as propaganda to show what a pleas-

ant life the Jews were having," Jones said.

In fact, a Red Cross contingent visited Terezin in spring of 1944 to inspect conditions in the camp. The Nazis turned the camp back into a quaint town and shipped thousands of people to Auschwitz to thin out the population. After a tour, Red Cross visitors watched a performance of *Brundibar*, an opera performed by the camp's children.

The Red Cross visitors were fooled with the display, and more prisoners ended up on trains to death camps. The students also had the opportunity to meet Ella Weisberger, one of the children who starred in *Brundibar*. It was really cool for Ella to talk with us too," Annie Currin said. "She told us a few stories about living in the camps. It was really cool to get to know the other kids too."

Rosales said the story of Terezin's prisoners

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El Segundo Getting Greener by the Minute

By Brian Simon

In the ongoing quest to educate residents and business owners about environmental responsibility and sustainability, the City of El Segundo has upped its "eco ante" through a number of upcoming programs, events and sponsorships. On the heels of last weekend's well-received free composting workshop (held May 9 at the Joslyn Center and attended by 60 people—more than double last year's turnout), the City has scheduled several more major green events over the next few months.

The next event, set for Saturday, June 13 from 8 a.m. to noon, will al-

low residents to take home up to two free high-efficiency toilets to replace water-guzzling models. To qualify for the giveaway, one must show proof of residency with a copy of the most recent water bill and current driver's license, and must install the new toilet(s) and return the old ones at a recycling event on July 27. Those who already have two ultra-low flush toilets installed in their homes cannot participate. No walk-ins are allowed. To register, call 866-931-3494 or go to www.swe-inc.com. Distribution is on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Then on Saturday, June 27, residents

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