Dear Families,

The 2020-2021 school year will go down in history as a year like no other. In response to the 2019 novel coronavirus, we were forced to close our schools, businesses, and press the pause button on our lives as we knew them. We navigated uncharted territory, unable to rely on the past to make sense of the present or to plan for the future. The only thing that was certain was the constant state of uncertainty in which we lived, and at times we felt overwhelmed with just how much was beyond our control.

In response to the ever-changing conditions in our world, we all had to routinely pivot as we tried to make sense of our changing realities. We all had to work harder than ever, and we had to stretch ourselves more than we knew we were capable of doing.

But, we did it together.

The challenges of the past year have illuminated the very things that have historically made La Jolla Elementary School such a special place for children. I’ve always loved the way our families, educators, and staff come together in the best interest of the students we serve.

And, that hasn’t changed. This year, our parents and teachers forged new partnerships. Because teachers weren’t able to look over their students’ shoulders or watch their facial expressions to ascertain their mastery of skills and concepts, they had to rely on parents for insight and support. Because parents weren’t experts at implementing a wide array of instructional strategies or behavioral interventions, they had to lean on our teachers for their expertise. The physical distance between us forced us to come closer together in other ways, and we found that leaning on each other for support - as we had always done - was the only way we’d get through this in a manner that helped our kids.

The past year, though challenging, has not been without important les-
The past ten months have been incredibly challenging, so more than anything, I hope that you’ll take a deep breath, reflect upon and learn from the past year, and have blossomed into independent learners, which will aid their educational careers in the years to come. We all have so much to be grateful for. I would traditionally close this final Tidings article by reminding you to continue supporting your child’s learning this summer. However, as we know, this year has been anything but traditional. The past ten months have been incredibly challenging, so more than anything, I hope that you’ll take a deep breath, reflect upon and learn from the past year, and have blossomed into independent learners, which will aid their educational careers in the years to come. We all have so much to be grateful for. I would traditionally close this final Tidings article by reminding you to continue supporting your child’s learning this summer. However, as we know, this year has been anything but traditional. The past ten months have been incredibly challenging, so more than anything, I hope that you’ll take a deep breath, reflect upon and learn from the past year, and have blossomed into independent learners, which will aid their educational careers in the years to come. We all have so much to be grateful for.

CJ DeLacy — Kindergarten
"My favorite thing about being back at school is playing on the playground!"

Lena Schrift — Front Desk
"When I returned to campus in August, I was so happy to be at school but I felt sad because I missed our students. It felt so empty and really quiet. During phase 2 when the students returned to school I was filled with joy and so were they. I will never forget their excitement and I was thrilled to see all of their sweet parents."

Monet Vizmig — 1st Grade
"I love to eat snack and lunch with my friends!"

Ms. Nancy Rice — 1st Grade Teacher
"The best part is seeing the students together. They are connecting and making friendships. They are learning how to get along and work out problems. They are eating lunch together, playing games, working, and laughing together. It's wonderful to see and that is something I missed very much.

One parent, Victoria Pearce, says: "Ms. Boyle taught three of our boys in 3rd grade. It was nothing short of transformative. It's quite brilliant for someone to flick the switch in a child's mind the way she does, from that year forth mediocrity would not suffice, the boys believed they can be anything they want, achieve their dreams, they just need to be their best self and have some grit. I often heard her over zoom saying, YOU CAN DO IT! She believes in them and they believe in it."

When asked about her favorite part of being a teacher, Ms. Boyle replied: "Working with the kids and watching them grow physically and academically, getting and giving lots of hugs, and planning exciting curriculum and activities and, of course, robotics to keep them engaged and wanting to come to school."

Ms. Boyle, with her inexhaustible energy and love of adventure, is kicking off her retirement with the same zest she dedicated to teaching by first heading "home" to England with visits to Ireland and Scotland. Then off to tour France to find a second home and, lastly, through Spain to Portugal. We are grateful for the lives you've changed and send you all our love.

WHAT I LOVE MOST ABOUT BEING BACK ON CAMPUS...

WHAT I LOVE MOST ABOUT BEING BACK ON CAMPUS...

WHAT I LOVE MOST ABOUT BEING BACK ON CAMPUS...

WHAT I LOVE MOST ABOUT BEING BACK ON CAMPUS...

WHAT I LOVE MOST ABOUT BEING BACK ON CAMPUS...

WHAT I LOVE MOST ABOUT BEING BACK ON CAMPUS...

WHAT I LOVE MOST ABOUT BEING BACK ON CAMPUS...

WHAT I LOVE MOST ABOUT BEING BACK ON CAMPUS...

A BELOVED COMMUNITY EVENT... WITH AN INTERNATIONAL TWIST!!

The Amigos Fiesta began in 1987 and is one of LJES’s oldest and most beloved community events. The fiesta was originally created to build community between the students and parents from Logan Elementary, who had enrolled in the Voluntary Ethnic Enrollment Program (VEEP), and LJES. Parents and teachers gladly volunteered to come and cook at the school in an effort not only “to raise money to help the school” but also “so that the kids could know each other and the parents could participate more together.” And so, the very first Amigos Dinner began with the theme “Many Friends, One World.”

34 years later, this message is more poignant than ever. Experiencing a global pandemic together as a school community demonstrated just how interconnected and dependent we are upon one another. To honor this most unusual school year, the PTO reimagined this important annual celebration. Families were invited to host their own Amigos Fiesta with the games, food, and decorations that celebrate their cultural traditions. It was wonderful to see so many families celebrate friendship and community with a global and socially distanced twist!

FIFTH GRADE 49ER DAY: RECREATING THE GOLD RUSH SPIRIT

One of the highlights of 4th grade is 49er Day, when our students get the chance to supplement their studies in California history by recreating the spirit of the Gold Rush. This year, the teachers went the extra mile to make it happen within our current restrictions. The mini-miners worked in groups to follow clues around school until they found the “Motherlode”, where they dug for gold nuggets.

“DEDICATED, PASSIONATE AND INCLUSIVE! — STEPHANI MCCASE-HALLORAN IS NAMED TEACHER OF THE YEAR”

Ms. Stephani was named the 2021 Teacher of the Year by her peers at La Jolla Elementary School. She has taught at our school for about 20 years and loves it here because of “the kids, the parents, the sense of community.”

Dr. Hasselbrink says that Ms. Stephani is “incredibly dedicated to her students and families, as demonstrated by the long hours she puts in to ensure that she is ready for her students and is able to meet their needs.”

After an incredibly unique school year, Ms. Stephani believes that all her colleagues deserve recognition. “We all work so hard.”

Congratulations Ms. Stephani!
On April 16, LJES students took a “Moment of Science” to consider the impact COVID has had on our environment and what each of them could do to help. Students recycled the ubiquitous mask (takes 450 years to decompose) to make planters, participated in clean-ups, and planted flowers. Thanks to Vanessa Emmerly and Mark Egan, our Co-Chairs.

**FAMILY SCIENCE NIGHT: A MOMENT OF SCIENCE**

On April 16, LJES students took a “Moment of Science” to consider the impact COVID has had on our environment and what each of them could do to help. Students recycled the ubiquitous mask (takes 450 years to decompose) to make planters, participated in clean-ups, and planted flowers. Thanks to Vanessa Emmerly and Mark Egan, our Co-Chairs.

**MS. DEVINE: “DEDICATED ARTIST AND TEACHER”**

Our beloved former Art Teacher, Ms. Sonya Devine passed away on April 22nd. The LJES community celebrates the vibrance, joy and passion that Ms. Devine contributed to all our lives. For almost 15 years, her boundless love of art and teaching inspired us to see colors, lines, and textures in exciting new ways. She brought out the best in her students by inviting them to express themselves and explore their creativity. Her door was always open, a symbol for the openness she shared with all who wanted to come in and create. Ms. Devine will be missed.

**MESSAGE FROM FORMER PTO PRESIDENT, KAT PEPPERS**

Dear LJES Families,

It has been a privilege to be a part of the LJES family for the past eleven years. When I think about the countless memories our family has made here, I am in awe of all that this powerhouse community accomplishes in an average school year -- it has been a non-stop fun fest with some serious academics and awards thrown in! We are all fortunate to be a part of a school with a long tradition of greatness that must not be taken for granted, something the global pandemic has reminded us of.

As I leave LJES, I am forever indebted to the many, many, many volunteers and teachers at LJES who go above and beyond, who work tirelessly behind the scenes -- sharing their passions and talents to ensure that our village school continues to R-O-C-K! Those who willingly give their time to serve on the PTO Executive Board and the 30+ Committee Chairs who independently and professionally orchestrate the events and productions we all love and expect. Selfless people who share their talents such as graphic design, photography, law, science, literacy, gardening, art, music, wellness, athletics, finance and organization. Those who volunteer every Wednesday to ensure Pizza Wednesday is fun for everyone’s children! Professionals who design and publish our school’s productions, communications, ebblists and social media posts and those who make sure all of our events are staffed with volunteers who are cleared to safely work with our children. Volunteers who coordinate the room parents who keep us informed and help make our teachers’ loads a little lighter. Extroverts who welcome new families, who know how to throw parties and events, and those who serve on both parent boards and more -- you are some of the best people I know. Thank you for juggling your careers, your personal time, and your families while still finding time to serve. I stand on your shoulders.

I know volunteering doesn’t come naturally to everyone, but it’s the lifeblood of this school and it greatly helps enrich our kids’ experiences despite being part of a large, urban school district. As we step out of the pandemic’s shadow, I encourage all who wish to see LJES remain on par with surrounding private schools to step up and serve either with PTO, Friends, or both. Join the School Site Council or the School Governance Team. And donate your time and your money as if your children’s education depends upon it -- because it does. The greatness we have all come to love and expect will not happen in a vacuum. As Dr. Seuss wrote in *The Lorax* “Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing’s going to get better. It’s not.”

In closing, I feel lucky to have been part of a school with a long tradition of greatness built on a strong parent-teacher foundation, as well as high expectations on the part of our collective community. Although this last year has been a difficult one, we’ve heard it said by those who have experienced greater hardships before us that “...crisis precedes transformation.” I know everyone cannot wait to see the excellent placers that LJES goes next year and beyond!!

Kar Peppers
LJES PTO President
2019-2021

**A GIRL SCOUTS GUIDE TO EATING HEALTHY**

Started at LJES and comprised of 11 LJES alumni who are currently in 10th grade, Girl Scouts Troop 3655 completed their Take Action Project, a necessary step for the Gold Award (the highest achievement within Girl Scouts). The Scouts identified eating well as their focus, conducted research including interviews with food experts, and condensed their learnings to share with the community in a *Girl Scouts Guide to Healthy Eating*. Check it out for tips on understanding food labels and making healthy choices and alternatives, including recipes!

Please contact peppers.kat@gmail.com for additional information.

LJES Alumni: Aubrey Branstetter, Ava Grodko, Sophie Hochberg, Sarah Kaplan, Grayson Lejuwan, Elizabeth Pari, Annie Peppers, Samantha Pochiello, Paige Repp, Gigi Smith, Sofia St. P’

**SPONSOR HIGHLIGHT: HI SWEETHEART**

Hi Sweetheart is a little gift boutique located in the heart of La Jolla, on Ivanhoe near the Post Office. The shop is filled with hand-picked gift items from craftspeople and small companies from around the world. Hi Sweetheart prides itself on its unique blend of distinctive jewelry, fun & functional kitchenware, letter-pressed stationery, delightful books, lovely candles, and darling baby gifts. It is the place to find gifts for all occasions and a little something for everyone!

Molly, the owner, is there to help find the perfect card or gift. Local delivery and curbside pickup are available. Head in before Father’s Day for some great gifts for dads! While you are there, please thank Molly for her unwavering support of LJES!
Remember to shop the market this summer. From fresh fruit, eggs, produce, and lunch, the market has it all. The Open Aire Market is a fundraiser for LJES, your patronage helps our school.

The market will be bursting with farm fresh produce all summer long! From sweet cherries, to vine ripened tomatoes.....beautiful squash blossoms to corn on the cob.... don't miss out on all that's in season!

And the market is the perfect place for brunch or lunch each Sunday. You'll find made to order ceviche, decadent crepes, and countless other tasty morsels from around the globe - there is truly something for everyone!

Our talented local artisans will be on hand with everything from clothing and jewelry to home decor and plants..... come shop local!

A special thank you to Gala chair, Sonal Patel, all the volunteers who helped and supporters like you!

A letter from the President of Friends:

My name is Marcia Branstetter and I am the volunteer who holds the role of the Friends Foundation president. It is a big title, but I will share with you that it is not as scary as it sounds. First of all, it has the word Friends in it. Additionally, all it requires is a desire to help and support what is best for the children, and mainly a love of LJES. LJES has been a part of the Branstetter family for a very long time. My husband and his siblings went to LJES, and we have been here for 13 years. Last year, right as the pandemic started I was approached and asked to take on the role. After my initial “Who me? Surely you mean someone else” reaction, it was a natural yes. A perfect way to end the Branstetter time at LJES and to give back to the school that has given so much to my family.

I have 3 children: my first, a freshman at college, my second, a sophomore at the high school, and my last, a 5th grader here at LJES. We have many wonderful memories of our years spent here. Staring with kindergarten and Ms. Allison, we love you! Ms. Nicolidias teaching them that a question starts with “May I” and cans are on shelves. The fun plays, and the 4th and 5th grade teachers solidifying math and English skills, as well as how to settle playground challenges. Besides these memories, we have many successes in our children’s lives due to the impact of the love and care that the administration, staff, and teachers have poured into our children. Impact that we believe is due to the work of Friends and the PTO, volunteers and supporters like you, which enables the teachers to be able to focus their attention on our children's needs.

I could go on and on about how wonderful each and every person is who calls LJES their job, but instead I will take a quick moment to thank Dr. Hasselbrink for holding her head high this year, and for all the PTO and Friends and other volunteers who gave their time these past, challenging months. A special thanks to the Friends board, Micaela Jeffery, Nicole Peck, Katy Hall, Amy Goin, Elizabeth Van Clief, Carol Henry, Catherine Baker, Melissa Miller, Sonal Patel, Katy Siddons, Sherry Ahern, Andrea Russel, Tricia Caviola, and Jenny Hochberg.

As I end my time as Friends president and at LJES, I ask you to join me to welcome Katy Hall, our new Friends president. I know you will look back at your time here with fond memories as I do.

-Marcia Branstetter
PLEASE SUPPORT OUR PEARL SPONSORS

BIRD ROCK COFFEE ROASTERS
CALIFORNIA

LA JOLLA VILLAGE ORTHODONTICS
KATHERINE A. WONG, DDS, M.S.
P AUL K. UPATHAM, DDS, M.S.
7575 Eads Ave Suite 101, La Jolla, CA 92037
P: 858.459.3353 • www.sandiegoorthodontist.com

CHINESE BILINGUAL PRESCHOOL

SEASIDE PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY & ORTHODONTICS
La Jolla’s only pediatric dental office
875 Prospect Street, Suite 202, La Jolla
(858) 551-9700 | www.myseasidesmiles.com

SHOP SMALL
SHOP LOCAL
SHOP Hi Sweetheart Gift Boutique
STATIONERY, SOUVENIRS, HOME DECOR
CANDLES, LOCAL ART, BOOKS
ACCESSORIES, GIFTS FOR KIDS
7920 Ivanhoe Avenue
IN THE HEART OF LA JOLLA
WWW.HI-SWEETS.COM
@HISWEETSLAJOLLA

mini & me
made with ❤️ in NYC

INTERESTED IN BECOMING ONE OF OUR SPONSORS?
PLEASE CONTACT
AMY GOIN
AMYOLSONGOIN@GMAIL.COM

Tidings is a publication of the La Jolla Elementary PTO and Friends of La Jolla Elementary Inc, 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporations. As such, content will be at the sole discretion of the PTO and Friends.