

The following press release was sent on February 15, 2012.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### Countywide Awards Presented for Outstanding Contributions to Education

COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA, FEBRUARY 15, 2012 -- The Orange County Board of Education and County Superintendent of Schools, William M. Habermehl, presented four Outstanding Contributions to Education (OCTE) awards at the monthly board meeting on February 15, 2012. The OCTE program honors administrators, teachers, clerical staff, specialists, crossing guards, nurses, bus drivers, Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), volunteers, business leaders, and community organizations that have made significant contributions to education. Awards are presented six times annually and nominations are received year-round. The program, which began in the early 1980s, has made an impact in the community by acknowledging the value of giving and honoring those who have offered their time and talents to support education in schools throughout Orange County.

#### February 15 Honorees:

Dr. Leslie Wind, Director, Orange County Academic Center, University of Southern California (USC) School of Social Work, donates her time, facility, and other resources to support the Orange County Department of Education. She has donated the use of the state-of-the-art USC Orange County Academic Center for numerous trainings and conferences including gang prevention, cyber danger, threat assessment, and crisis response for educators, mental health practitioners, and youth providers. Dr. Wind was a sponsor of the Orange County Department of Education Safe Schools Gang Intervention Conferences where over 800 people were educated in gang intervention.

Jack W. Bedell, Board Member, stated, "The trainings provided at the USC Orange County Academic Center are vital to the growth and effectiveness of Orange County educators. Dr. Wind is an invaluable resource and we are honored to have her support and partnership."

SMART Foundation, Chris Clark, Founder, began his vision when he realized that musical programs that inspired his career were being cut or reduced in public schools. Chris helped to form a coalition of parents and community members who worked with district leadership to ensure the remaining programs stayed intact. He founded the SMART Foundation in 2000 to provide both an advocacy training program, called Champions for Music and Arts Education, and a unique instrument rental

program that provides a reoccurring source of funding for schools in need. To date, the SMART Foundation has provided instruments to approximately 13,000 students in Orange County and donated over \$400,000 to local school music programs. Chris maintains membership in many arts organizations, where he advocates supporting music education.

Dr. Ken L. Williams, Board Member, stated, "We are indebted to Chris Clark and his passion that led to the creation of the SMART Foundation. He has touched the lives of thousands of students through his work and has enabled music education to continue in many schools that would have otherwise been eliminated."

Dr. Ana Jimenez-Hami founded the Orange County Children's Therapeutic Arts Center in 2000, in memory of her parents. Her love for children with special needs and the humanitarian work her parents did in their lifetimes gave her the inspiration to start this unique community organization that focuses on the arts as a vehicle to empower youth in Orange County. The Center provides after-school music and art classes to children with special needs. In 2001, the Center expanded its mission to provide services to all children, including at-risk youth, due to the high need in the community and the need for artistic programs for under-privileged families.

Board Member, Dr. Long Pham, stated, "Since its beginning, Orange County Children's Therapeutic Arts Center has grown tremendously and expanded its level of services, offering educational, therapeutic, and other support programs for culturally diverse families from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds in Orange County. We salute the vision and efforts of Dr. Ana Jimenez-Hami."

Festival of Children Foundation is dedicated to improving the lives of children by strengthening the charities that serve them. Founded by Sandy Segerstrom Daniels, the 10th annual Festival of Children was presented every weekend during the month of September 2011 at South Coast Plaza. As a result of this project, Festival of Children has become a nationwide effort and is reaching large numbers of organizations in the United States. One hundred percent of the administrative costs are covered by designated funding, allowing donations to go further in direct support of programs and services that benefit children and the member charities. The Foundation has provided grant funding to charitable, educational, and service organizations that serve children in Orange County.

Elizabeth Parker, Board President, stated, "The non-profit Festival of Children Foundation gives a voice, guidance, and support to more than 400 member charities across the United States. This organization is a model for the great things that can be achieved through collaboration and mutual goals."

For more information about the Outstanding Contributions to Education Awards Program, visit [www.ocde.us/outstanding](http://www.ocde.us/outstanding) or contact Phyllis Berenbeim at (714) 966-4303 or [pberenbeim@ocde.us](mailto:pberenbeim@ocde.us).