

Federal education officials visit Journey School

U.S. Department of Education, EPA, USDA officials pay a visit to Aliso Viejo charter.

By KELLIE MEJDRICH
ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER



Journey School Executive Director Shaheer Faltas greets a tour group at the Aliso Viejo school Monday.

Aliso Viejo's Journey School welcomed federal education and environmental officials Monday to show them just what being a Green Ribbon school is all about.

Hint: It involves pruning fruit trees, composting, making your own fig jam, baking bread and building bows and arrows out of yucca fibers and willow branches.

At least that's how it goes at Journey School, the first school in Orange County to win a U.S. Department of Education 2013 Green Ribbon Award. It's an honor that recognizes schools for creating healthy learning spaces that emphasize reducing effects on the environment.

U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools Director Andrea Suarez Falken was joined by representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Agriculture, as well as board trustees from the Capistrano Unified School District, on the visit as part of a tri-state tour this week that included stops at 16 Green Ribbon awardees in California, Oregon and Washington.

The trip continues the department's Education Built to Last Facilities Best Practices tour started earlier this summer, a cross-



PHOTOS: MINDY SCHAUER, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Seth Whiteaker, 11, a sixth-grade student, greets Andrea Suarez Falken with the U.S. Department of Education on Monday. Falken was part of a group with the "Education Built To Last" Facilities Best Practices tour.

country tour to "see and discuss ways school facilities can enhance the conditions of learning," a department news release said.

Aliso Viejo was in the middle of a cluster of honorees in Southern California, including Longfellow Ele-

mentary School and Charles Evans Hughes Middle School, both in Long Beach. Faculty and parent volunteers guided visitors through the school's six gardens, where they learned about curriculum related to sustainability, in-

cluding the use of native edible and medicinal plants, rainwater harvesting, and cooking the food they grow. The tour ended with a spread of food cooked and prepared by the students - including bread, crackers, fig jam and scones.

Journey, a K-8 public charter, emphasizes a Waldorf curriculum, an educational philosophy based on the work of Austrian philosopher Rudolph Steiner. The school's curriculum emphasizes, among other things, "a holistic educational picture" focused on "development of the intellect, social-emotional well-being, and physical capabilities of each student," the school's charter explains.

Falken said she was impressed by the maturity of the students, and she hopes other schools can take note.

"It's a fantastic mélange of sustainability and Waldorf practices, and the community engagement is evident," she said. "But what struck me is the students, though. They're really mature and articulate as high

school students, easily. They've got fantastic life skills."

Sierra Stewart, Julia Dye, Jade Jang and Georgia Bennett, all 11 years old, gave a presentation in the school's mini-orchard of 30 donated fruit trees on how students prune the trees to help them grow while learning about plant diseases and pests with the help of Master Gardener Erik Katzmaier with the Orange County Master Gardeners. Those kinds of partnerships - with master gardeners, parents and nonprofits like Earthroots Field School - are what make the eco-literacy program come together, school officials said.

During the presentation, Bennett demonstrated how to prune a peach tree. Afterward, the three cheered her on for her work.

"I'm up there sweating, it's so hot!" she exclaimed to the laughs of her classmates, wiping sweat from her brow.

"But it looks good!" Stewart said.

"Yeah, and you get the benefit of fresh fruit," Jang said, adding that the plants produce oxygen for them to breathe.

For parent Brad Southard, who has two children at Journey and volunteers regularly at the garden, the school gives his kids a vital opportunity to learn and grow in unique ways.

"We actually moved to Aliso Viejo for this school," Southard said. "It gives our kids a community in which they're allowed to be children for longer. There's not a lot of talk about what TV shows they're watching, for example ... the school offers a little oasis from that, and there's a whole community that's like-minded."

CONTACT THE WRITER:
949-366-9473 or
kmejdrich@ocregister.com

NEED HEATING & A/C?
Gomez Heating and Air, Inc.
Is your one stop shop specializing in free estimates, sales, service, installation, maintenance & new construction. Call (714) 658-7126 today to schedule an appointment.

American Standard
HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING
(UPFLOW) 3 TON CHANGEOUT
AS LOW AS **\$1399** Furnace 80% Installation + Tax

(UPFLOW) 3 TON CHANGEOUT
AS LOW AS **\$1799** A/C INSTALLED 13 SEER + TAX

(UPFLOW) 3 TON CHANGEOUT
ISUPER SAVER! COMPLETE SYSTEM
AS LOW AS **\$3599** 80% EFFICIENCY 13 SEER + TAX

Rebates & Tax Credits on Qualifying Systems
Lic. #920850

CALL NOW! Financing 6 or 12 Months Same as Cash OAC
Insurance for Your Protection and Peace of Mind
(714) 658-7126 • (877) 804-2891

Family owned and operated • #1 Volume Dealer in So. Cal
Gomez Heating and Air, Inc. is solely owned and operated.
NOBODY BEATS GOMEZ! NO ONE!

DUI DEFENSE
TOP GUN
DUI DEFENSE ATTORNEY®

Myles L. Berman®
"Friends don't let friends plead guilty!"™

888-4-TOPGUN®
WWW.TOPGUNDUI.COM



The Orange County Register Presents FREE Home Buyer/Seller Workshop

90 Minute Home Seller & Buyer Workshop
The Orange County Register, Hoiles Auditorium
625 N. Grand Avenue, Santa Ana, CA 92701
Wednesday, September 18, 2013
6:00 PM to 7:30 PM (Check-in at 5:30 PM) **RSVP by Tuesday, September 17th**

FREE REFRESHMENTS & DOOR PRIZES!

- Topics that will be covered include:
- How to sell your home and find and buy your next home as easily as possible.
 - How to command the highest price for your current home.
 - How to get a good deal on your next home.
 - Tips for selling without the hassle.
- Who Should attend?
- Move up buyers
 - Empty Nesters
 - Anyone interested in buying or selling their home

Attend this educational meeting before you buy or sell your next home!
Hurry! Seating is limited.
RSVP at 714-796-5060 or go to: ocregister.com/promos/homesellerworkshop

Special Guest Speakers:

Mac Mackenzie
Coldwell Banker

Steve Buccheri
Equity Title

Jeff Welch
Alliance West Mortgage

Brought to you by: The Mackenzie Group, West Coast Escrow, Equity Title & Alliance West Mortgage

ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

BEAUTIFUL REPLACEMENT WINDOWS

American Vision
Windows & Solar

Enjoy your summer with **energy efficient windows** from American Vision Windows

SUMMER SPECIALS
FREE INSTALLATION*
+
WE PAY THE TAX**

Call before 9/30/13 and ask about our great offers and a **FREE in-home estimate**

949-625-4991

Follow us on Facebook!

ORANGE COUNTY

"Revolutionizing the Home Improvement Industry one customer at a time."
- Bill & Kathleen