

long beach

908

magazine



local business
local teams
local people



**Coupons on
Page 42!**

Summer 2014

McKayla Maroney

on how her family's
move to East Long
Beach helped vault her
to Olympic Gold

Grow Your Own Garden

local school volunteers
teach us vital steps
to growing plants in a
Long Beach climate

Truly a Community School... Los Altos Brethren Preschool and K-6

By John Grossi



Principal Debbie Martin and Assistant Principal Andrea Witbeck (far right) agree that once you become part of the Los Altos Brethren family, it is hard to leave



Pre school plays in the sandbox during recess



Brethren students reading during quiet time

Great schools, public and private, are a constant reminder of why the “908” area is such a great community. Los Altos Brethren is no exception, fostering a unique community or as they like to call it, “family” spirit among its preschool through 6th-graders, as well as among its alumni who stay connected and relevant in the community through high school, college, and beyond.

I sat down with “new” principal Debbie Martin (we use the term “new” lightly—she has been with the school for over 30 years) as she explained why community is such an integral part of the Los Altos Brethren experience.

“We know from research that academics are only part of what shape children to become active, engaged and successful adults. This is why at Los Altos Brethren, we focus on the whole child - being loving, fair, hardworking, and critical thinkers, both academically and spiritually.”

The teacher to student ratio is small at Los Altos Brethren, on average around 1:15, so kids, parents, and teachers alike are important parts of making the school successful. “We tend to build great relationships and keep up with our kids well after they graduate,” says Mrs. Martin, “And it is always so wonderful to hear all the amazing things they are

doing out in the community and in the world.”

Many Los Altos Brethren alumni go on to be valedictorians at their high schools public or private, and EIGHT in the last decade have gone on to win the prestigious President’s Scholar (tuition-free) award at Cal State Long Beach.

Assistant Principal Andrea Witbeck attributes this success to the flexibility teachers enjoy within the Los Altos Brethren curriculum, which is why she originally sent her kids there, long before becoming part of the staff. While constantly up-to-date and informed regarding the cutting edge in education, teachers are not forced to use any technique that is not going to be successful for their students. Everything taught at the school is based on proven curriculum and used by the teachers in ways that result in students gaining the deepest understanding in a fun and creative environment.

As confirmation, a tour of the school reveals a refreshing sight of classrooms filled with books, pianos, toys, blocks, and math manipulatives. Teachers know the hands-on learning involved with playtime, reading, and music are critical components to helping the children become successful in the core curriculums, as well as the importance of learning via technology in the school’s newly renovated computer lab. The school has a huge music program for instruments and choir, and every child who chooses to participate is given one-on-one music lessons in addition to the group lesson time common among other schools. Mrs. Witbeck describes Los Altos Brethren as, “One of those special schools that is even better once you’re on the inside!”

The school teaches all subjects through a Christian worldview, but is non-denominational and welcomes all families whether or not they attend church. The school invites all families, preschool through grade six, to call and schedule a tour. A strong work ethic and community are life long gifts that keep on giving! ■

#5 Using Fertilizers

#6 Improving Soil Quality



Kettering Elementary

Late fall of next year, Kettering students hope to see the first owl nests in their new “owl box.” Perched in the front school tree hangs the owl box, which is a large wooden structure built to capture gophers and other rodents. It is an old farming technique designed to ward off pests like mice, who become trapped in the box, where the owls then snatch them up for food.

“This is a unique, resourceful way to control the gopher population out here,” says Kettering parent Kelly Parkins.

A camera will be installed into the owl box that will broadcast a live video stream on the internet of the owls nesting. The plan is to have students monitor the owl nests from the computer lab.

Parkins also volunteers at Kettering to help beautify the campus. Students assist her with planting, cleaning up weeds, and mulching. “I think it’s a good way to get kids outside and it also helps the school and the district as a whole to look nice,” Parkins says.

#5 Using Fertilizers

Using a combination of organic fertilizers (manures and composts) and inorganic chemical fertilizers often yields better results than merely using one alone. If you use manure, apply it several weeks before planting, allowing it to fully emulsify into the soil. One pound of dry steer or dairy manure per square foot of soil surface works best. Chemical fertilizers are available in a wide variety of compounds but ammonium sulfate is most suitable. Apply 1/2 to 1 pound per 100 square feet of soil.

#6 Improving Soil Quality

Ensure garden soil is well drained. Mix in a 2 to 4-inch layer of compost or manure at a depth of at least 10 inches in the soil. This will help soil irrigation and improve soil quality overall. Also, covering the garden surface with a 3 to 4-inch layer of organic matter or mulch helps the soil to retain moisture and is helpful in controlling weeds. Since mulching decreases evaporation from the soil by 70 percent, you won’t have to water as often.

Los Altos Brethren K-6

Real-life, hands-on education has always been an important part of the science curriculum at Los Altos Brethren School, especially in Kindergarten. When a planter box was built for the Kindergarten yard, a plastic viewing window allowed the children to observe root growth underground.

Milkweed plants were added to attract endangered Monarch butterflies. Within a short time, Monarch butterflies found the milkweed and began eating and laying their eggs. Each day, the children observed the life cycle as the caterpillars hatched, ate the milkweed, grew to full size caterpillars and made chrysalises. Students were on hand to see the first of many butterflies emerge.

Since they, in turn, laid their eggs on the same milkweed plants, the cycle continued. It’s been a great way to really experience the whole butterfly life cycle, and whenever the students see a butterfly on the playground they wonder if it’s one of “theirs”!

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I've never been much of a gardener or Olympic vaulter, but I can admire those who are, and I can look pretty pathetic when I attempt either vocation. So if you're like me, this issue is to learn, admire, and marvel at more amazing accomplishments being completed every single day in East Long Beach.

This issue we have included a section in the back of our magazine with testimonials and coupons for our great advertisers. I hope this encourages anyone on the fence to give our local businesses and independent contractors a try. I have found great value and accountability in supporting small business for many purchases in East Long Beach. We have some truly great people to work with. We hope you enjoy the issue!

John Grossi
Editor/ Publisher

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