



April 18, 2008

from the office of Superintendent Robert Collins

Teacher of the Year Finalists



Dan McDowell (Left) and Thomas Waldron (Right) represent GUHSD as County Teacher of the Year Finalists.

The Grossmont Union High School District (GUHSD) is very proud of the two finalists selected to represent it in the San Diego County Teacher of the Year competition. The following sketches describe each teacher "in their own words" and those of their students.

Dan McDowell is a history-social science teacher at West Hills High School. "I love history, from the broad historical trends that have shaped the various regions of the world to the personal, first-hand stories of struggles and triumph." Dan has been a **leader in the use of technology in the classroom** with students creating digital video projects, completing WebQuests, mapping historical events on Google Earth, publishing their own work on blogs and using wikis to collaborate online. **"I cannot imagine teaching without a computer and the internet a click away."** "On any given day you may find my classes participating in deep discussions, dissecting primary sources, examining photographs online, reenacting portions of history, trying to solve a problem, analyzing art, writing poems, listening to music, empathizing with a specific individual from history or playing a historical game."

Thomas Waldron is an English teacher at Valhalla High School. "An experience in planned spontaneity" is how one student described Thomas Waldron's English classes. The 31-year veteran is a continual learner, seeking out every experience possible to broaden his knowledge. **"I feel it only fair to demand as much of myself as a learner, as I do of my students."** "Through all (classroom) activities, **I try to create an atmosphere where students feel a part of something bigger than just another English class and where being disengaged is simply impossible.**"

The work of these teachers is reflected in the dedication and spirit of hundreds of other teachers throughout our District. It is this work that defines the very best in education and why our whole community is proud of the Grossmont Union High School District. Congratulations to Tom Waldron and Dan McDowell for your accomplishments and for being that very special teacher in the lives of children and parents.

"The Kumeyaay Way" Viejas Presents \$250,000 to Granite Hills for New Synthetic Turf Field



The Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians presents a check for \$250,000 to Granite Hills High School Principal Georgette Torres

Bobby Barrett, Tribal Chair of the Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians, spoke at Granite Hills High School about the "Kumeyaay Way." His comments referenced his Indian ancestors and how, as they traveled from the desert to the sea, each took care of one another, providing shelter and food. The Tribe perpetuates that tradition today, maintaining a **strong sense of community** and a commitment to continually help others and give back to the community.

On Monday, April 7, members of the Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians presented Granite Hills High School with a check for \$250,000 toward Granite Hills' \$1.2 million campaign for a synthetic turf field. Other major contributors of this project include the County of San Diego, Helix Water District and the Grossmont Union High School District. The project is in design, and work is expected to begin following approval at our June Board meeting. The project is **scheduled to be completed by early September.**

There is an important lesson to be learned from such generosity for our schools, students and communities. It is one of understanding the importance of "giving back to our community" and **"taking care of one another."** Schools and students are part of a larger community that we need to work with and find ways to support. Our District and its schools are very appreciative of the support they have received from the Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians over the years. Their partnership with our schools has contributed greatly to our campus environments and the quality of life in East County.

What we can do now as schools, is to continue our commitment to find ways in which **we can support** our communities. Community service projects, collaborative programs with senior citizen organizations, community clean-up projects and many other programs engage students, the school and the community and do make a difference. This also shows our appreciation to those who have helped our schools.