“It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.” –Albert Einstein

Six extraordinary individuals were recognized at this year’s Vision for Excellence event, held at The Center Club on May 6. These dedicated educators were part of an intensive and rigorous process that included classroom visitations and personal interviews. Nominations came from district administrators, peers, community leaders and/or parents from within their schools. The Vision for Excellence recipients were selected based on their leadership, innovative learning environments and ability to expand the classroom and/or school into the community.

Dr. Juan Lara, UCI’s Assistant Vice Chancellor, Enrollment Services, served as emcee at the May 6 event, with Rick Stephens, Senior Vice President, Internal Services at Boeing serving as honorary chair and guest speaker.

Mr. Stephens also presented this year’s Vision for Excellence Business Award to Washington Mutual. The company has been a champion of Project Tomorrow since 1998, with significant funding to encourage systemic change in science education in Orange County schools. The company has also donated computers and work stations, supported teacher professional development programs such as the UCI Summer Science Institute, and donated to the IMMEX program, which trains teachers in science content, critical thinking and problem solving skills. Most recently Washington Mutual has supported Project Tomorrow’s Community Science Nights and the Vision for Excellence Awards.

Each Vision for Excellence recipient received $5,000 in cash, with their schools receiving an additional $1,000 each to enhance science education. This year, Project Tomorrow is proud to honor:

**Naomi Jue**, Acacia Elementary School, Fullerton School District (elementary teacher award)

**Sandra Kaszynski**, Wilson Elementary School, Newport-Mesa Unified School District (elementary teacher award)

**Nona Reimer**, John Malcom Elementary School, Capistrano Unified School District (elementary teacher award)

**Susan Marie Kolberg Pritchard, Ph.D.**, Washington Middle School, La Habra City School District (middle school teacher award)

**Jon David Johnson**, Trabuco Hills High School, Saddleback Valley Unified School District (high school teacher award)

**Margaret Sepulveda**, Tustin High School, Tustin Unified School District (principal award)
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S CORNER

During May, Project Tomorrow is leading a county-wide “Celebrate Science” initiative that began with a May 3rd proclamation from the Orange County Board of Supervisors, under the sponsorship of Supervisor Bill Campbell. The proclamation declares May to be “Excellence in Science Education” month for the entire county.

Joining with Project Tomorrow are the leaders of the county’s major science venues, organizations and educational institutions. A new web site, www.celebratescience.org, will keep you informed of a rich array of science activities that will be taking place in Orange County throughout May and in the months to come.

Watch for special programs and announcements on KOCE and in your local newspapers. This is a “first” for Orange County and is made possible because of the generous contributions of our leading science organizations. Information will be available about family activities, training programs for educators, career information and special events.

Celebrate Science is designed to:

• Provide opportunities for all Orange County science organizations to share information about their resources with parents, students and teachers
• Increase awareness of and support for science education in Orange County
• Recognize the contributions of outstanding Orange County science educators
• Provide information on science and science-related careers
• Provide parents with information about how to recognize a quality science program at their schools

Thanks for joining the celebration!

To date, Celebrate Science partners include:

Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation
Butterfly Initiative
California Regional Environmental Education Community - Region 9B
California State University, Fullerton
Chapman University
Discovery Science Center
Environmental Nature Center
Future Scientists and Engineers of America
Inside the Outdoors
Irvine Public Schools Foundation
KOCE
Ocean Institute
Orange County Department of Education
Orange County Science & Engineering Fair
Orange County Science Educators Association
Pacific Marine Mammal Center
Planetary Science Institute
Project Tomorrow
Santa Ana College
Santa Ana Zoo
Science@OC
UCI Observatory
University of California, Irvine - Center for Educational Partnerships

For more information about Celebrate Science, please call our offices.
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2005 VISION FOR EXCELLENCE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Elementary Teacher Award

Naomi Jue
Acacia Elementary School
Fullerton School District

“A mindful observation of discerning patterns and developing questions encourages sensitivity among students for their environment. To be able to integrate science in ‘living and community laboratories’ has been my goal.”

– Naomi Jue

A teacher at Acacia Elementary School since 1989, Naomi Jue has been inspiring students since 1965, including an overseas assignment at the International Embassy School in Djakarta, Indonesia from 1970-71.

Currently a third grade Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) teacher, Ms. Jue has a particular passion for botany and has found many ways to incorporate the Fullerton Arboretum into her science instruction. She has taught classes for other teachers at the arboretum and has invited their professors and docents to speak in her classroom. In 2004, she developed curriculum that could be used by elementary teachers and docents during fieldtrips to that venue—all on her own time.

Professional Credentials
Bachelor of Arts-General Elementary, California State University, San Jose
Masters in Education, Grand Canyon University, Arizona

“Naomi Jue has the ability and passion to fully inspire her students to ‘reach for the stars.’ Her lesson plans clearly reflect a rigorous curriculum, particularly in the area of inquiry-based science. She is an exemplary third grade GATE teacher, a leader at Acacia School and a leader in the GATE community.”

– Teddi Vallejo, Principal, Acacia Elementary School

Elementary Teacher Award

Sandra Kaszynski
Wilson Elementary School
Newport-Mesa Unified School District

“I think the best lesson inspires enthusiasm and leaves students curious to find out more about the subject.”

–Sandra Kaszynski

Sandra Kaszynski has been a teacher for just seven years, yet she is already creating a reputation to admire and that inspires others. She teaches second grade at Wilson Elementary School, a challenging environment with 97% of its students qualifying as English language learners and 100% of the children on the free lunch program. A small number of her students come from homeless shelters as well. Yet her creativity and ingenuity help all children relate to the wonders and rigors of scientific discovery.

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Ms. Kaszynski’s favorite science theme is marine biology. Her whale unit incorporates math, writing, and science skills—students even draw a life-size whale in chalk on the playground! This unit culminates with a whale watching trip—an event that many of her former students have remembered as “the best thing they ever did in school.”

**Professional Credentials**
Bachelor of Science, California Polytechnic University, Pomona
Teaching Credential, California State University, Fullerton
Masters of Science, California State University, Fullerton

“Sandy is committed to making science come alive daily, not only for her students but her teaching peers as well. A typical conversation sees Sandy keeping colleagues apprised of the newest scientific discovery or event. In this way she helps keep science uppermost in their minds.”


**Elementary Teacher Award**

**Nona Reimer**
John Malcom Elementary School
Capistrano Unified School District

“Science develops higher levels of critical thinking skills with greater depth and complexity—especially when it is connected to the real world.”

—Nona Reimer

Nona Reimer’s passion is to develop a sense of wonder in her fifth grade students. Each year they work on a community service project related to science to engage her students in learning. This approach gives students the opportunity to move beyond knowledge and understanding, make real world connections, and ultimately make a difference in their community.

Nona has participated in statewide projects to improve staff development and science education. She was a district mentor of elementary science for the Capistrano Unified School District and currently teaches at Cal State Fullerton. Recognition of her work has included Teacher of the Year in 1993 and 1995. In 1999, the Orange County Educators Association selected her as the Orange County Elementary School Science Teacher of the Year.

**Professional Credentials**
Bachelor of Arts-History and Environmental Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara
Masters of Religious Education, Western Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary
Multiple Subjects Credential, California State University, Hayward

“To be a student in Nona’s class is a real gift to the student’s total educational experience. She is a master at weaving together content and standards, with other curricular areas, while having fun too! Her students have an opportunity to participate in several community events, including Disney’s Jiminy Cricket Environmentality Project. Her classes have taken second place statewide FOUR TIMES!”

—Maureen Allen, Program Specialist, Orange County Department of Education
Middle School Teacher Award
Susan Marie Kolberg Pritchard, Ph.D.
Washington Middle School
La Habra City School District

“Forging bonds between the school and community provides me with additional opportunities to help students learn.”

–Susan Pritchard

If you are an engineer, chemist, or physicist… and have a student in one of Dr. Pritchard’s classes… be prepared. She will probably put you to work!

Susan Pritchard, Ph.D. teaches eighth grade science and is a master at using a variety of resources to teach her students—including their parents. Parents working in science and technology-related fields speak to her classes, providing the students with real-world applications of science curricula. She also keeps parents informed of student progress and classroom activities in an effort to encourage parents to become actively involved in their children’s learning.

Professional Credentials
Bachelor of Arts-Social Ecology/Child Development, University of California, Irvine
Master of Science-Education Administration, California State University, Fullerton
Ph.D.-Research and Higher Education, Claremont Graduate School

“Dr. Pritchard is a wonderfully creative and dynamic individual who is not afraid to explore beyond her current knowledge base to find science curricula with which to entice her students to learn. She brings an enthusiasm for science into the classroom that motivates even the most reticent of learners. She works diligently, researching science topics year-round—often enlisting industry and education experts to enhance her understanding of diverse fields.”

–Debora L. Moore-Frey, Parent

High School Teacher Award
Jon David Johnson
Trabuco Hills High School
Saddleback Valley Unified School District

“Learning is a participatory sport, and requires a change in a student’s behavior, understanding, attitude, curiosity, appreciation, motivation, or self-esteem.”

–Jon Johnson

As a science teacher and department chairman at Trabuco Hills High School, Jon Johnson is a true champion for science education. His passion has taken him to Sacramento, where he has made several science-related presentations on behalf of the California Department of Education.

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A science teacher for more than 34 years, Jon helped launch two science departments in the Saddleback Valley Unified School District. He has taught Chemistry, Chemistry Honors, Life Science, and Biology, and has been involved with Project Tomorrow’s Docent Program, where high school students teach standards-based science lessons to elementary school students.

**Professional Credentials**

Bachelor of Arts, Pepperdine University  
Standard Secondary Credential, California State University, Long Beach

“Jon is frequently referred to as one of the most popular teachers on campus. Observation of Jon’s classroom would quickly reveal innovative science instruction. His students have fun while actively engaged in the learning process. He is a strong proponent of ‘hands-on’ inquiry based science and frequently uses laboratory investigations to support the attainment of scientific concepts.”

–Ray A. Gatfield, Ph.D., Director of Secondary Education, Saddleback Valley Unified School District

**Principal Award**

**Margaret Sepulveda, Tustin High School**  
Tustin Unified School District

“One of my strongest traits is providing opportunities and freedom for the true artisan in each classroom to emerge and inspire.”

–Margaret Sepulveda

An alumna of Tustin High School, Margaret Sepulveda found her love of science in the classrooms she now oversees. Margie’s leadership has helped facilitate educational science field trips, assisted in the development of new science courses, and encouraged many interactive activities that reinforce inquiry and investigation, such as having physics students construct boats out of cardboard to test buoyancy.

Throughout her career, Ms. Sepulveda has worked to bring science literacy to elementary, middle and high school students. She has served on committees responsible for choosing science texts, has worked to align texts and materials to state standards, and oversees staff development in science at Tustin High School. Another key point is the school’s philosophy, “Whatever it takes!” Ms. Sepulveda has created a professional learning community at the school, developing a master calendar that provides time each day for professional development and review of curricula and financial resources.

**Professional Credentials**

Bachelor of Arts-Multiple Subjects, Chapman University  
Masters of Science-Education, California State University, Fullerton

“During Margaret Sepulveda’s tenure, the science department at Tustin High School has doubled their course offerings in Advanced Placement science classes. Five and a half years ago, Tustin High had just 16 students taking an Advanced Placement exam in science. In 2004, that number was almost 140 students—an increase of 775%! This increase in participation is directly traced back to the strong support and leadership of Margie Sepulveda.”

–Randy Reta, Science Department Chair, Tustin High School
Project Tomorrow thanks the following donors whose gifts (made between September 1, 2004 and April 21, 2005) support the organization’s ongoing programs:

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Students explore marine life during a Project Tomorrow Community Science Night at the Ocean Institute.

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