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LAUSD CUTS THE RIBBON ON JOHN LIECHTY MIDDLE SCHOOL New Middle School
Carries Forward Mission of Pico Union Community Hero

Los Angeles - Pico Union children now have greater educational opportunities following today's ribbon cutting for the new John Liechty Middle School. Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Board President Mónica García and Superintendent David L. Brewer III and other special guests at today's ceremony. This much-needed middle school is named for the late District employee and education activist who started "Beyond the Bell" after school program.

"John Liechty worked tirelessly for the students and families of this community, particularly our middle schoolers," Board President Mónica García said. "This new middle school will not only commemorate John's vision-it will also reaffirm our shared commitment to giving every student the opportunity to succeed."

"In the first stages of the school design process for John Liechty Middle School, I provided the guiding vision for an instructional program based on a small learning communities concept. This SLC design provides a personalized learning environment, appropriate for this level of students," said Local District 4 Superintendent Richard Alonzo. "Since John Liechty Middle School is linked to the new arts high school, which open in 2009, it was also important to employ arts teachers, representing the four arts areas: music, dance, drama and art. Therefore, John Liechty Middle School is built around SLCs, rigorous instruction, professional learning communities and complete course offerings in the visual and performing arts."

The new three-story, 1,700-seat school provides critical relief from overcrowding to both Berendo and Virgil middle schools. The facility features classrooms for general studies, as well as specialized classrooms for science, art, and performing arts. The site also offers an instrumental music lab, choral room, dance studio, theater-style instructional classrooms and state-of-the-art computer labs.

John H. Liechty worked at LAUSD for more than thirty years in various capacities, including as an assistant and principal at Berendo Middle School, and an assistant superintendent in charge of San Fernando Valley schools. Most significantly, Liechty created a lasting contribution as creator of the "Beyond the Bell" expanded-day programs, which serves thousands of LAUSD students each year.

"John would be so pleased to see such a beautiful school, particularly in the Pico Union District with kids he just adored," Sheridan Liechty, Liechty's wife, said. "The fact that the school relieves overcrowding in the area would please him greatly and I'm sure he's looking down with a big smile on his face. We feel very honored and proud and feel the school is magnificent."

"John Liechty Middle School is a tremendous asset to this community that has for too long been in need of new schools," Councilmember Ed Reyes said. "This new community school means children aren't bussed far from home, and also means parents and caregivers can play a more active role in their children's education."

LAUSD has partnered with the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) to upgrade Liechty Middle School's athletic field with artificial turf to ensure a year-round play surface. LAUSD contributed \$1.5 million in Joint Use bond funds to install the surface, matching a contribution from the AYSO to create and develop a new youth soccer program in the Pico-Union community. This joint use partnership is another example of LAUSD collaborating with community-based organizations to improve student and neighborhood resources.

"Students at Liechty Middle School have a great opportunity to take full advantage of improved learning environments," said Superintendent David L. Brewer III. "Not only will they benefit from the Small Learning Community model at Liechty, but they will have the opportunity to attend several brand new state-of-the-art high schools, including Vista Hermosa and the already opened Miguel Contreras Learning Center."

Four Small Learning Communities at Liechty Middle School provide students with a close-knit learning environment and personalized structures for support. Four days of the week students meet with an "advisor" who shepherds them through their middle school experience. The advisory sessions help students explore their interests and opportunities for higher learning and career paths, as well as provide a support system to monitor academic progress and encourage engagement in the school community.

"This project is representative of what our construction program is delivering District-wide, from its small learning communities to the turf field which makes possible a partnership with AYSO," LAUSD Chief Facilities Executive Guy Mehula said. "By making use of creative, space-saving features like covered parking that provides a deck for basketball courts, the design of the school also maximizes the use of land for optimal recreation areas - which is a significant achievement in a dense urban environment."

John Liechty Middle School is part of the LAUSD's \$20 billion school construction program to build 132 schools by 2012. The program is designed to provide a neighborhood school on a traditional calendar for every student, eliminate involuntary bussing and create small learning communities in secondary schools. To date, LAUSD has completed 68 new schools and 57 additions, providing nearly 70,000 new classroom seats for students throughout the District. For more information, please visit www.laschools.org.

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