

## **SWIM WITH THE GOLDFISH – March 2018**

Project-based learning is an important concept in today's world of education. Students (aka goldfish) are asked to think beyond the daily lesson and to explore how the concepts they are learning find a place in the real world around them.

Desert Sands Unified School District's Goldfish Bowl does just that. Based on concepts found on the popular television show Shark Tank, a group of "sharks" listen to the proposals of five groups of students and teachers to consider the merits of the projects based on innovation, student input and participation, the potential benefit to the district's LCAP (Local Control Accountability Plan), sustainability, and if the project can be replicated at other schools or classrooms. Cash awards of up to \$4,000 per project are then available for the sharks to distribute to the Goldfish Bowl competitors.

As part of the Superintendent Action Plan, Goldfish Bowl was first initiated in October 2017. The second edition was held in late February. A total of 17 applications were received. Senior staff then screened each application using advertised criteria. The field was narrowed to five and the real challenge began.

Four of the goldfish returned from the October competition. DSUSD parent **Tim Bradley, Jr.**, world champion boxer and local restaurant owner; **Brandon Weimer**, La Quinta High School grad and owner of Brandini Toffee; **Bianca Rae**, local newscaster and founder/CEO of the Bianca Rae Foundation; **Joe Wallace**, chief innovation officer, Coachella Valley Economic Partnership; and **Kathleen McEntee**, founder and president of Kathleen McEntee and Associates. They were joined by former Jack In The Box executive **John F. Hoffner**.

First up was La Quinta High School student Liam with his Soothing Hearts project. The creation of hearts to place within the incubator of newborns at Desert Regional Hospital is Liam's Eagle Scout project and he was seeking funding to create additional product while also asking for assistance in creating a foundation. His project was funded largely with in-kind contributions including mentoring, support, and advice. Bianca Rae offered assistance in the creation of his foundation, Kathleen McEntee offered to help create a marketing plan. John Hoffner pledged to assist on a business level.

Teachers from the district's Adams Early Learning Center were next with a cadre of little people showing the sharks just what they were asking for – "Sensory STEM" playground toys that provide different levels of sensory experiences. Adams was formerly an elementary school site and the playground materials are just a little bit too big and too "old" for the little ones who now play there. A number of classrooms at Adams are for special need students with unique abilities and playtime requirements. The deal was definitely sealed when Tim Bradley got down on the floor to play with the children and the proposed new educational and sensory building materials! The project was funded at \$4,000.

Third project to be a part of Goldfish Bowl was "Fashion Forward" presented by Indio High School. The recently remodeled Indio High School includes a classroom for the fashion industry classes. Currently, 117 students are enrolled in the program of a series of four classes but 21<sup>st</sup> century equipment is needed. Fully funded, Judge Kathleen McEntee noted, "You had us sold before you even left the room!"

In addition to the \$4,000, the judges offered to assist by sharing information about the program with their community contacts. Fashion is a growth industry in the valley with design, merchandising, buying, and more providing rewarding careers.

Next came Amistad High School. One of the smaller schools in the district, Amistad is a non-traditional secondary program that assists students in credit recovery. For many of them, in the past, college was just not on their radar, not something they have aspired to. But, as teacher Alexis Arias noted, that is no longer true. Home to two of DSUSD's CTE programs (Career Technical Education), the school boasts academic and skill-teaching programs for automotive and HVAC, two programs that can be continued at our own College of the Desert. As Alexis noted, credit recovery doesn't necessarily mean that you don't want to go to college. This funding, as clearly shown on a budget presented by Alexis and her team, would help to transport students to college field trips while creating a space on campus to be named the College and Career Center. The project would develop a college-going spirit. Send in your college pennants for the walls of the new center because it was fully funded.

The final participant came from Gerald Ford Elementary School. Teacher Kim McGrath was there to assist but the real sales pitch came from her students, equipped with samples of what they were looking for. As one student said, "You don't always want to play outside during recess". Their proposal was for "Operation Alternative Recess". They have identified a space on campus, complete with a small building, that can house materials including a Lego wall. The judges were impressed with the creativity as well as the collaboration and teamwork needed to put together this proposal and to make the dream come true. Operation Alternative Recess was also fully funded.

This event closed this year's Goldfish Bowl competition but rumor has it that students and teachers are already gearing up for the fall.



Superintendent Scott Bailey, John Hoffner, Brandon Weimer, Bianca Rae, Tim Bradley, Joe Wallace, Kathleen McEntee.

Liam and his mother with Soothing Hearts



Adams Ants and Sensory STEM



Fashion Forward

Make College Familiar



Tim Bradley checks out materials for Alternative Recess