

Skyline School students place 7th in the nation at WordMasters Challenge

A team representing Skyline Elementary School achieved Highest Honors in the recent WordMasters Challenge — a national vocabulary competition involving nearly 150,000 students annually. The fifth grade team scored an impressive 183 points out of a possible 200 in the second of three meets this year, placing seventh in the nation.

Competing in the Blue Division of the WordMasters Challenge, students from Skyline Elementary School who achieved outstanding results in the meet include fifth graders London Gilbert, Josie Martin, Avery Merson and Grace D. The students were coached in preparation for the WordMasters Challenge by their teacher, Shannon Applegate.

The WordMasters Challenge is an exercise in critical thinking that first encourages students to become familiar with a set of interesting new words (considerably harder than grade level), and then challenges them to use those words to complete analogies expressing various kinds of logical relationships. Working to solve the analogies helps students learn to think both analytically and metaphorically. Although most vocabulary enrichment and analogy-solving programs are designed for use by high school students, WordMasters Challenge materials have been specifically created for younger students in grades three through eight. They are particularly well suited for children who are motivated by the challenge of learning new words and enjoy the logical puzzles posed by analogies.

The WordMasters Challenge program is administered by a company based in Indianapolis, Indiana, which is dedicated to inspiring high achievement in American schools. Visit www.wordmasterschallenge.com.

SDJA students make blankets for Israeli orphans

BY KAREN BILLING

San Diego Jewish Academy (SDJA) students are making blankets for the Lev LaLev Orphanage in Israel as part of Children Helping Children International's BlanKids project. The plan is for SDJA students to make 95 blankets that will be delivered in person by the seniors during their class trip to Israel.

Fifth- and sixth-grade students got a start on the work March 8, snipping and weaving blue and green fleece blankets in teams.

Tatiana Zunshine, the executive director of Children Helping Children International, was born in Russia. She was a human-rights activist, and said she was kicked out of her country for her actions, given just three days to pack. She has lived in America for 30 years and has continued in her humanitarian efforts, founding Children Helping Children as a way to show kids that they are never too young to make a difference. With the BlanKids project specifically, kids have an opportunity to do real hands-on work that will provide comfort and love to a child in need.

With BlanKids, Zunshine typically pairs a school with an orphanage in need, but at SDJA she didn't have to, as sixth-grader Bella Silberstein had already established a connection. Bella has been supporting the Lev LaLev orphanage for the last two years, raising money through selling bracelets and handmade cards, and in September she asked that instead of birthday gifts, her friends donate to Lev LaLev. Bella will have her Bat Mitzvah in Israel in the summer of 2018, so her ultimate goal is to visit the orphanage and have Lev LaLev girls join in her celebration.

"I read about what Bella did in the paper and connected with her. I was inspired by her and decided to come to this school with the idea of making blankets," Zunshine said. "I can't thank Bella enough for the inspiration and thanks to the



KAREN BILLING

Tatiana Zunshine, executive director of Children Helping Children, and Bella Silberstein.

school for being so receptive...This is a very special school."

Tikkun Olam, which means "repairing the world," is a big part of the education at SDJA. Students participate in a variety of community service activities to help them learn that they have a responsibility to make the world a better place.

Rabbi Baruch Rock said Tikkun Olam programs are seasonal and in the spring they celebrate the spirit of the Jewish holiday of Purim by giving gifts to the poor.

"Remember every little inch of fabric you cut and tie: you're making something filled with love, with the intention of helping those who are less fortunate than us," Rabbi Rock told the students.

While just fifth- and sixth-graders were working on the blankets last week, it is hoped that more students in the upper grades will also participate in the project.

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