

# THE SIGNAL



## Superintendent's Message

Dear SMJUHSD Staff,

As the calendar year comes to an end, I would like to thank each of you for your dedicated service during the first semester. I also wish for you peace, health, and joy during this holiday season. Maria and I look forward to taking time to rest, and spend time with family and friends.

This month we had several transitions on our school board. Last week, Dr. Jack Garvin graciously retired from the board after ending his 5th term. Dr. Garvin was honored for his service and leadership on the school board for 20 years, after a long career as a public school educator. We also invited back Ms. Diana Perez and recognized her for her tenure on the board the past 10 years.

This week, Ms. Alma Hernandez was sworn in after being elected to Trustee Area 3. She was previously provisionally appointed in September 2023. Dr. Tammie Castillo-Shiffer was also installed as the newest board member, after running unopposed for Trustee Area 1. You can read more about Ms. Hernandez and Dr. Castillo-Shiffer on page 5. Our Board elected Mr. Feliciano Aguilar to continue serving as President for 2025, and also elected Ms. Alma Hernandez as the new Clerk. I am grateful to our Board for their commitment and support to serve our school community.

During most of winter break, school and district offices will be closed to the public. Winter Intersession will run from January 6th to the 9th. We will reopen the district office on January 6, with schools reopening on January 13 for the first Certificated PD day. More information on this day and the rest of that week will be respectively provided by Dr. Krista Herrera and the Principals.

Thank you for all that you do for our students in SMJUHSD...where greatness grows!  
Have a joyful, restful holiday season and winter break. See you in 2025!

With gratitude,

Antonio Garcia  
Superintendent

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## Student Spotlight: Jimena Lopez

SMHS senior Jimena Lopez handles living with her mother, father, three brothers and her sister in a one-bedroom apartment with ease. She sleeps in the living room with her older sister. Her brothers sleep on a bunkbed in the bedroom with her parents.

But her privacy is on the way!

“Doing well in school and having a positive attitude is the only option,” said Jimena, adding that she’s not sure if her family will return to Mexico soon. “I want an actual career and to be able to buy a home with my own bedroom and bathroom someday.”

Jimena has a 4.08 GPA and hopes to attend UC Berkeley (or any of the other UC’s she applied to) where she will study to become a neurosurgeon or perform cancer research.

“I struggled with mental health issues and my brother has a condition,” she said. “So, I want to be an inspiration and help people who are struggling. This is very important to me.”

When Jimena is not studying or helping her siblings, she assists her family farm a small area. Her duties include feeding the chickens, tending to the crops, and maintaining the area.

Jimena will be the second one, after her sister, in their family to earn a high school diploma. Her father does not speak English, and her mother speaks primarily Spanish.



## Significant CAASPP Gains

Once again, congratulations to Math, English and Science teachers for the amazing test scores on the CAASPP. According to the California Department of Education (CDE), 2023-24 statewide assessment results show students in the SMJUHS who are meeting or exceeding standards in English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science increased significantly at all three of the district’s comprehensive high schools: Santa Maria, Ernest Righetti, and Pioneer Valley.



# Dr. Jack Garvin Retires After Decades of Service

Dr. Jack Garvin, who served two decades on the SMJUHSD Board of Education, retired after the December 10th school board meeting. For almost 67 years, Dr. Garvin mentored, tutored, advised, and has remained faithful to numerous students, teachers, staff, board members and superintendents. He used both his common sense and his plain talk to make sure elected officials, as well as the public, knew the reality facing the SMJUHSD.

His interest in becoming part of the SMJUHSD Board of Education began when he was teaching at Chapman University. The students he had assigned to attend the Board Meetings would return to class with mixed reactions.

“I decided that the Board needed my help!” said Dr. Garvin. “And now.....some 20 years later and a thousand Board Meetings later, I am stepping down. Retired people have the time and the insights either as a parent or an interested citizen to become involved. This position is about understanding what education is. It keeps you engaged, works your mind, and offers unique challenges. With retirement, you have the time for public service. Bring your wisdom, insights, and energy to the task and make a difference.”

Dr. Garvin loves to think back on his career. He recalled a “brush with fame” when he was a new teacher in 1957 at Chester Nimitz School in the Cupertino School District. “It was a special Day honoring Admiral Nimitz. He and his wife visited my classroom, and we sang and dedicated our school song “Old Rattler” to them,” Dr. Garvin recalled. “I played my guitar, and my fifth graders sang the school song. Admiral Nimitz and his wife were very touched!”



He quickly moved through the educational ranks. In 1979, he began his 19 years of service as the superintendent of the Orcutt Union School District. While serving on the SMJUHS Board, Dr. Garvin has always been a well-known figure in the educational community. He held a regular monthly informal breakfast meeting in Buellton, bringing together local and county educational leaders.

Community activities ranged from former Kiwanis President, [Santa Maria noontime] to being co-founder of Santa Maria Soccer along with former city councilman, Bob Orach and Ralph Sherwood. He served as Chairman of the Citizens Committee that generated the Orcutt Community Plan and Vice-President of the Righetti Booster's Club. In addition, he was elected Director of the Santa Maria Chamber of Commerce and as a co-owner of Salon Studio 23, along with wife Inge, received the first Chamber Award for "Small Business of Year."

Dr. Garvin was recognized in 2012 for his educational work and received the inaugural Retired Administrator the Year Award. The Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) honored Dr. Garvin for not stopping his life's dedication to education. He also received the Prestigious Ferd Kiesel Award for exemplary service as a Superintendent.

Dr. Garvin, who is 89 years old, attended Central Washington University and has a doctoral degree from Brigham Young University.



Jack Garvin has been a steadfast advocate and a powerful voice for students, consistently addressing issues that truly make a difference in their lives. His distinguished career, both as a former superintendent in Orcutt and a respected leader across our county, has earned him numerous prestigious awards and highest accolades. But what stands out most to me about Jack is his genuine passion for service and his unique talent for bringing people together. He's a 'can-do, will-do' person—always ready to lend a hand, whether it's organizing school board workshops or supporting educators and school leaders in their work. Jack's contributions are remarkable, and his legacy of service will continue to inspire us all. I wish him the very best in his retirement and adventures ahead.

**Santa Barbara County  
Superintendent of Schools,  
Dr. Susan Salcido**



Dr. Garvin has devoted his life to improving student learning and well-being for the betterment of our community. His wisdom and experience as a long-time educational leader helped guide our school district's governance team during his tenure on the board. Dr. Garvin's retirement from the school board is a momentous milestone reflective of a lifetime of dedicated service to our community. He will be missed.

**Superintendent Antonio Garcia**



# New SMJUHSD Board Members Sworn In

Two SMJUHSD Board of Education members were sworn in during a school board meeting on Dec. 17th.

Alma Hernandez was provisionally appointed in September 2023, replacing Trustee Amy Lopez. Ms. Hernandez recently ran a campaign and won the seat. Her Trustee Area 3 term will expire in Dec. 2028. Dr. Tammie Castillo-Shiffer, who ran unopposed, will replace Dr. Jack Garvin's Trustee Area 1 seat. Dr. Garvin retired after 20 years as a Trustee. Her term will expire in Dec. 2028.



Ms. Hernandez is employed as a field representative for Santa Barbara County Supervisor Joan Hartmann. Prior to that position, she was the Healthy Start Family Service Center Director for the Guadalupe Union School District. She has lived in the district for 24 years.

"I am deeply grateful to the voters and teachers I've met over the past months for their support and commitment to our students," Hernandez said. "I am honored to serve as an elected board member and remain hopeful for another opportunity to build trust and foster collaboration with any teachers who have yet to get to know me and understand my unwavering support for them and their invaluable work. I take this role seriously and will continue to listen, serve and be a fierce advocate for our students, families and District staff."

Dr. Castillo-Shiffer is currently the Director of Multilingual Services at the Santa Maria Bonita School District. Before that, she was an EL Coordinator and Science Teacher for the SMJUHSD. She has lived in the district for 37 years.

"It is both an honor and a privilege to join the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District Board," Dr. Castillo-Shiffer said. "I am deeply committed to advancing the District's mission of delivering an exemplary education that equips all students for success in higher education, career pathways, and life's broader endeavors. As I step into this role, I look forward to engaging in meaningful collaboration with my fellow board members, educators, and families to create transformative change and foster a lasting, positive impact on the lives of our students."



# FEELING SOME HOLIDAY STRESS?

*Try These Simple Tips to Stay Balanced & Energized*

Try the following tips recommended by the American Heart Association.

## 1. Keep up healthy habits.

Make a pact with yourself during the holidays. Decide that you'll move more and do something [active every day](#) over the next three weeks. Take it a step further, and pledge to start the day with a [healthy breakfast](#), limit the sweets and get at least seven hours of sleep each night. If you don't completely give up your healthy habits, you won't feel like you have to start over once the holidays are over.



## 2. Beware of seasonal sweets.

The holidays often dish up extra helpings of less-than-healthy treats. Try preparing [healthy snacks](#) that are ready to eat when the urge to snack strikes. If you're hosting a holiday party, challenge yourself to make delicious and healthier options using our [recipes and cooking tips](#).

## 3. Stay active.

Instead of beating yourself up about missing a workout, sprinkle some healthy activities into your daily routine. For example, if the weather isn't too frightful and you're working from home, ride your bike around your neighborhood during a lunch break. If dinner is going to be a feast, opt for a light lunch, then take a vigorous walk. And [keep the family moving](#). When the kids are home from school, squeeze in some active chores and trips to the park.

## 4. Take time for yourself.

Give yourself the gift of peace. If you need some downtime to recharge, declare a "me-treat" and do something that relaxes you. Try [yoga, meditation or spending time in nature](#).

## 5. Make a plan for the new year.

Your poinsettia's pooped and the gifts are all gone. Now what? It's a great time to reset for the new year – but don't go dashing through your to-do list too fast, or you might not stick to your plan. Lay out realistic, sustainable steps for the months ahead. For example, start a daily walking routine and sign up for a [Heart Walk](#) before you set your sights on that marathon.



# Marino Wellness Events

The district has partnered with Marino Wellness to bring virtual wellness events to our employees. These 25-minute webinars are focused on various topics of mind, body, spirit, and financial well-being. Event names and links are announced via email at least one week before the scheduled event time and rooms are secured at each site for employees that do not have their own classroom or device. Join us on the dates below:

Date	Time	Focus	DHS	ERHS	PVHS	SMHS	SSC
Wednesday 1/8/25	1:45 pm	Spirit/ Mind					Conf. Room B
Friday 2/28/25	1:45 pm	Financial	Room 103	Room 2016	Lab 1 (in library)	Room 460	Conf. Room B
Thursday 4/17/2025	1:45 pm	Mind	Room 103	Room 2016	Lab 1 (in library)	Room 460	Conf. Room B
Friday 5/2/2025	1:45 pm	Body	Room 103	Room 2016	Lab 1 (in library)	Room 460	Conf. Room B
Wednesday 6/11/25	1:45 pm	Body/ Mind					Conf. Room B

## Congratulations to Our Mid-Year Retirees!

- **Therese Nagy**, Accounting Assistant II at the DO
- **Juan Mendiola**, Custodian at RHS
- **Barbara Del Rio**, Food Service Worker I at SMHS
- **Samantha VanPatten**, Science Teacher RHS

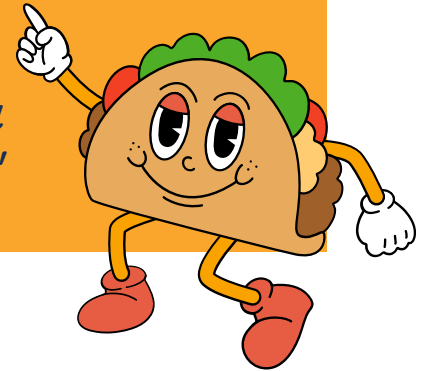


DATE	TIME	LOCATION
12/20/24	11:00 am - 1:00 pm	SSC
2/18/25	11:00 am - 1:00 pm	RHS
3/18/25	11:00 am - 1:00 pm	PVHS
4/01/25	12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	CTE
4/15/25	11:00 am - 1:00 pm	SMHS
5/20/25	11:30 am - 1:00 pm	DELTA
June TBD	11:00 am - 1:00 pm	SSC

# Taco Tuesday!

Get ready for some delicious fun as Taco Tuesday returns! Join us at various district sites for tasty tacos and great company. Check the schedule for your site's date and time. Don't miss out on this flavorful tradition!

*"Taco 'Bout a Great Time!"*



## Diana Perez Honored

Former SMJUHS Board of Education Member Diana Perez was recognized as a Distinguished Board Member on Dec. 10th. Thank you for your service, Diana!



Submit photos & story ideas to Kenny Klein at [kklein@smjuhsd.org](mailto:kklein@smjuhsd.org)