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Citrus Elementary School students pledge support for peace

By ALEJANDRO CANO

In an attempt to teach students the value of peacemaking, Citrus Elementary School held a "Hands Around Citrus" kickoff event to generate awareness of the school's commitment to the PeaceBuilders program.



The renowned anti-violence youth program was implemented at Citrus after careful research conducted by School Principal Sandie Watkins.

Watkins is confident that the program's core principles of "Praise People," "Give Up Put-Downs," "Seek Wise People," "Notice Hurts," "Right Wrongs," and "Help Others," will be very beneficial to everyone at the school.

"The PeaceBuilders philosophy will empower Citrus to establish a common language using its six PeaceBuilders principles to unite children, staff, parents and the community," said Watkins.

The program, which has been implemented at two other Fontana schools and in more than 20 in the Inland Empire, aims to allow teachers to spend more time teaching and less time disciplining. It also creates a positive atmosphere by increasing positive, respectful behavior, while diminishing violence and disruptive behavior.

The short but entertaining kickoff rally featured first-grade students who sang "Teach Peace," followed by fourth and fifth grade students who recited their essays on "What It Means To Be a PeaceBuilder at Citrus."

Close to 200 parents had a chance to admire student-designed PeaceBuilders banners, which were displayed at the school. The PeaceBuilders artwork will also be on display at the Fontana Unified School District office the week of Oct. 24.

Estelita Bonavides, one of the parents, applauded Citrus' interest in protecting students and urged other schools to follow its footsteps to thwart violence and achieve peace on school campuses.

"I would like to see this program reach high schools and middle schools in addition to elementary schools," said Bonavides. "But first, I would like to see more elementary schools join this program, because it has some good ideas designed to protect our kids. For now, I'm happy knowing that my son will be taught the importance of peace."