



## NEWS RELEASE

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**CONTACT:** Lauren Creiman

(909) 833-9853

## Fontana Unified Elementary Students Learn Importance of Inclusion during “Start With Hello!” Week

**FONTANA, CA** – Juniper Elementary School students learned that saying “hello” to a new face at school could be the first step in beginning a lifelong friendship during an assembly commencing Juniper’s “Start With Hello!” Call to Action Week on Sept. 16.

“Start With Hello!” is a national program conceived by Sandy Hook Promise, designed to bring young students together to promote connectivity and inclusiveness. Sandy Hook Promise is led by several family members whose children were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary in 2012.

The assembly, coordinated and hosted by the Fontana School Police Department (FSPD), kicked off a weeklong slate of activities designed to teach students to be more inclusive and connected to each other, and to minimize the effects of bullying and social isolation.

“We are thrilled to partner with FSPD to bring the Sandy Hook Promise to Fontana,” Juniper Principal Tammy Fleming said. “‘Start with Hello!’ aligns well with our school goals of decreasing student marginalization and rejection before an individual chooses to hurt themselves or others. I am thankful to Police Chief Martin Sissac for bringing this program to Juniper.”

Fontana School police and safety officers spent the morning greeting students and their parents as they arrived at Juniper. During the assembly, officers demonstrated the proper method of making a classmate feel comfortable – if you see someone alone, reach out and help them by smiling and saying hello.

“I think this is a good program. It helps stop and prevent bullying structures and what causes them,” Juniper fifth-grader Dylan Bradshaw said. “We have a lot of new students at school and I will start saying hello to all the students I don’t know.”

School police officers and Juniper teachers joined together for a short skit showing the proper way to interact with new students and, with assistance from the Juniper Jaguar mascot, asked students to ask the student next to them about their favorite foods, TV shows and superheroes.

“I want to make new friends and I want to give others a chance to be my friend,” Juniper fifth-grader Angeline Salinas said. “If kids are spending more time talking we can all understand each other better.”

Throughout the week, Juniper students have interacted with FSPD for a variety of activities, including:

- **Lend-A-Hand** – Students create handprints, trace their hands, write their names on the hands and write or draw ways they can help be inclusive at school.
- **Human Bingo** – Students learn interesting facts about each other while completing a bingo card, which they will exchange for a “Friendship Token.” Winners will earn the opportunity to visit the school’s Jaguar Jungle.
- **Get Caught Saying Hello** – FSPD will “patrol” the playground, rewarding students with police stickers for being inclusive.
- **Buddy Bench** – FSPD will unveil a “Start with Hello!” mural in the cafeteria, then introduce the “Buddy Bench,” a designated area where students who are lonely or seeking new friends can sit. Students who notice those on the bench will invite them to play and engage them in conversation.

“Start with Hello is an extraordinarily simple yet effective method to make friends, and we hope it leads to many new friendships,” Fontana Unified Superintendent Randal S. Bassett said. “Our hardworking police and safety officers are invested in making our schools safe and nurturing and I cannot thank them enough for spreading the spirit of inclusiveness in Fontana.”

**PHOTO CAPTION:**

**FUSD\_JUNIPER\_HELLO:** Fontana School Police officers engage with Juniper Elementary students during a “Start With Hello!” assembly on Sept. 16, promoting connectivity and inclusiveness on campus.

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