



Press Release

For Immediate Release:
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Two Montebello Unified Instructors Recognized For Environmental Conservation Efforts

MONTEBELLO – Montebello Unified Environmental Coordinators John Garza and Eva Cupchoy were two of 12 people in Los Angeles County to receive awards from TreePeople for dedicating 23 years to sustainable urban environmental methodology and community building.

“We are so proud of them for establishing this 23-year legacy that will continue to benefit our campuses for years to come,” MUSD Board Vice President Lani Cupchoy, Ph.D. said. “Thank you for teaching our students the benefits of sustainability, taking care of the environment, and making healthy food choices — they carry lessons like these with them wherever they go in life.”

Garza and Cupchoy have built gardens full of fruit trees and vegetables at 28 District sites since 1993, teaching students about nutrition and selling produce to school cafeterias for use in healthy meals.

“Twenty-three years ago I never would have imagined these gardens would become so beneficial in teaching our students about responsibility and nutrition,” Garza said. “It’s rewarding to see our students get excited about growing their own fruits and veggies and to hear about them using the crops to cook for their families and create recipes.”

The two instructors connected over the years with TreePeople – a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping the community plant and maintain trees – who donated peach, apricot, lemon, lime, orange, mandarin, avocado and strawberry guava trees for planting throughout the campuses.

Now, Garza and Cupchoy teach students how to maintain the campus gardens and make routine checkups on the small farms each week. The produce harvested from these gardens is also sold at the District’s farmers markets held every quarter.

“These gardens are a point of pride for our District,” Superintendent Susanna Contreras Smith said. “They allow our students to take pride and ownership in growing and maintaining beautiful fruits and vegetables of their own, and this wouldn’t have been possible without John and Eva’s hard work over the years.”

Montebello Unified School District is a dynamic learning institution employing top-quality educators. It is the combined work of many that allows the District to continue educating more than 30,000 students every year using the 40 Developmental Assets at all of our school sites. It is through everyone’s efforts – students, parents, teachers, staff and administrators – that we are achieving the District’s number one goal of raising student achievement. Learn more online at www.montebello.k12.ca.us.



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Photo Caption

TREEPEOPLE: John Garza (left) and Eva Cupchoy (right) stand with TreePeople representative Ana-Maria Sanchez, who nominated them for their awards. Garza and Cupchoy were two of 12 people in Los Angeles County to receive the TreePeople award for their 23-year dedication to sustainable urban environmental methodology and community building.

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