



School news

from the Santa Barbara County Education Office

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To: All media
For immediate release
Feb. 8, 2017 — 16/17-N-12

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Rotary Club selects San Marcos HS teacher for special recognition

On Friday, Feb. 3, The Rotary Club of Santa Barbara recognized San Marcos High School guidance counselor Janina Ma for her outstanding job performance and contributions to public education. It is the second of four such awards the Rotarians will present to area educators this academic year.

Ma, a special assignment counselor at San Marcos High School's Academy for Success, is in her third year at the school. From 2003-2011 she worked as a school counselor at Balboa High School in San Francisco, at Leuzinger High School in Lawndale, and at Sparks Middle School in La Puente.

Since 1986, the Rotary Club of Santa Barbara has honored outstanding teachers from South Coast schools each year. It awards a high school, junior high, elementary, and special education teacher with a certificate and a \$1,000 check to spend on classroom needs. "Our teachers are second to none and perform daily heroic acts on behalf of students and families," said County Superintendent of Schools Bill Cirone, whose office coordinates the recognition with the Rotary Club of Santa Barbara. "We appreciate the vision, caring, and commitment of the Rotary Club of Santa Barbara in making annual awards that recognize the contributions of outstanding teachers, while providing resources that enable them to enrich their classroom environments."

"The Rotary Club of Santa Barbara is committed to supporting the Santa Barbara County Education Office, and it gives us great pleasure to recognize the efforts of outstanding teachers like Janina Ma," said Mike Bieza, chairman of the Teacher Recognition Committee of the Rotary Club of Santa Barbara. "Rotary of Santa Barbara and Rotary International members know that educators like Janina Ma have a tremendous impact on their students, who one day will be the leaders of our community."

Ma majored in Human Development with minors in Psychology, Sociology, and Chicano Studies from UC San Diego. She earned her Masters in Marriage & Family Therapy (MFT) and School Counseling (PPS) from San Francisco State. Her specialized academic background enables her to apply her considerable learning in important ways.

“I asked for an assignment switch this year to focus on students who have disengaged from school,” Ma says. “Many of these students have struggled academically, are frequently truant or are transitioning back from court schools. I feel strongly about this population because I feel that so often, these students are overlooked in school. For most, their school experience has not been positive, and I want to help change that for them.”

“Every kid is one caring adult away from being a success,” Ma observes, citing studies from Harvard that show that every child who winds up doing well has had at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive adult. “I believe that sometimes it takes believing in a child more than they can initially believe in themselves and seeing worth and goodness in them that they might not be able to otherwise recognize,” she says.

Since 2005, Janina has been married to Peter Ma, who is a math teacher in the district, and with whom she shares three small children: Ryah (7), Zia (5), and Camden (3). Clearly, however, playing a formative role in children’s futures is not an activity that the Ma family confines to the home.

“I am truly honored and grateful to be the counselor in the Academy for Success at San Marcos. To be able to serve students in this program along with other committed colleagues has been incredibly powerful and fulfilling,” Ma says. “I am inspired by these kids every day. I could not do what I do without the rest of Academy team, and I want to acknowledge and share this award with them. I’m excited to spend the money from this award to do something special for our kids.”

The Rotary Club of Santa Barbara meets at Fess Parker’s Doubletree Resort in Santa Barbara for lunch from noon to 1:30 p.m. on Fridays. Recipients of the club’s Teacher Recognition Awards are made with the assistance of the Teacher Programs and Support department of the Santa Barbara County Education Office.

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Cutline for photo:

Pictured: Janina Ma and Mike Bieza, chairman of the Teacher Recognition Committee of the Rotary Club of Santa Barbara

