



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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*For Immediate Release*

August 20, 2021

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### **LAEF Donates \$25,000 to staff Middle School Well Spaces!**

(Los Alamitos, CA) – The Los Alamitos Education Foundation (LAEF) was proud to donate \$25,000 last week to support the salary of Los Alamitos USD’s middle school mental health counselor Dr. Kirsten Jensen. In addition, over the past two years, LAEF donated \$60,000 for the construction of Well Spaces at both district Middle Schools - Oak and McAuliffe. This year’s donation ensures these important spaces will be staffed and that students will receive the support they need. This also marks the fifth year in a row that LAEF has made mental health a funding priority.

This donation is possible because of LAEF’s major donor group: the Los Al Leadership Circle (LALC). LALC members are distinguished, significant supporters of LAEF’s visionary work who commit to donating a minimum of \$1,000 annually. To learn more, please visit [LAEF4Kids.org/LALC](http://LAEF4Kids.org/LALC).

In a continued effort to proactively address the increase in mental health related issues among children and teens, Los Alamitos USD has increased mental health counselor staffing to five full time equivalents (up from 2.6 FTE) to provide emotional support to our students.

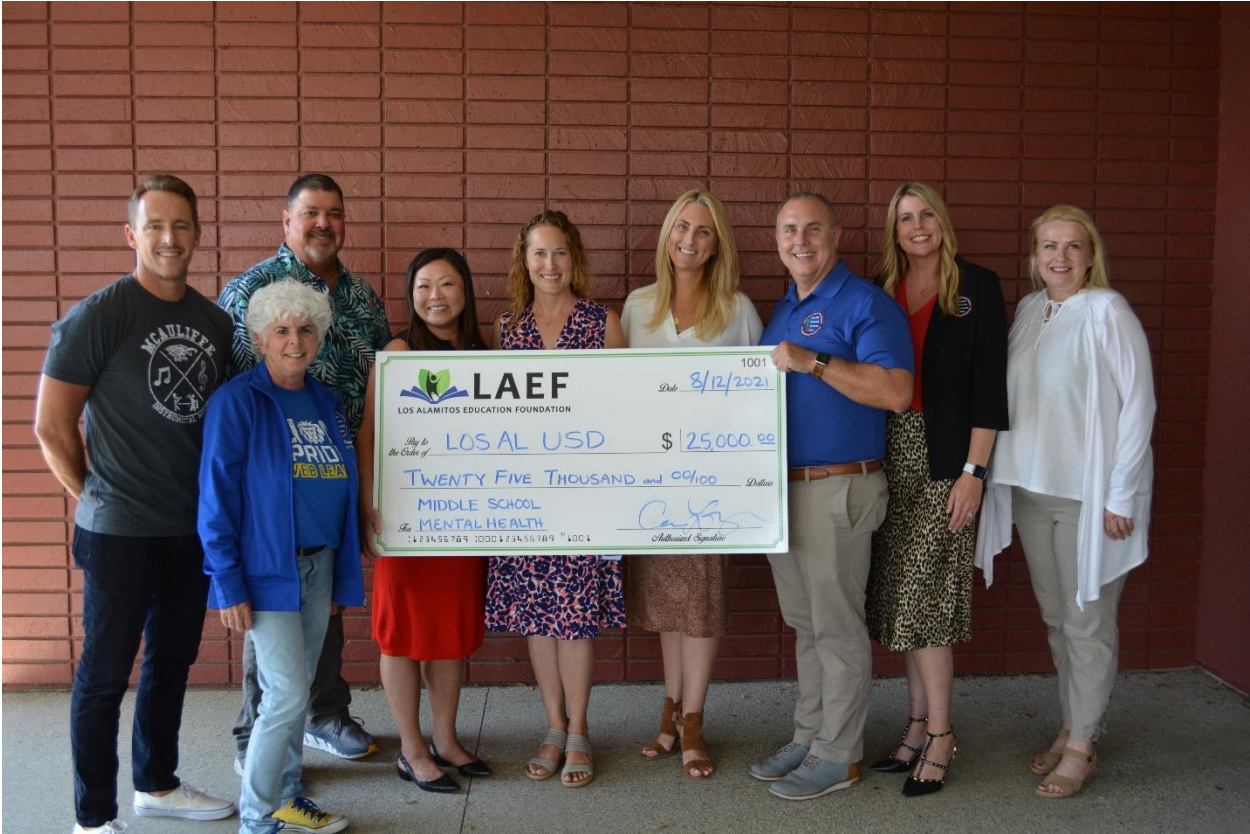
A classroom was transformed at each middle school to create the Well Spaces. Known as The Corner at McAuliffe and The Den at Oak, the spaces are centrally located on each campus to allow for easy student access. In addition to Dr. Jensen, school psychologists and mental health interns also staff the spaces, which provide a calm, safe and supportive environment to assist students with issues that impact their ability to be their personal best.

The Well Spaces could not have come at a better time. Amidst the COVID pandemic, youth are dealing with more stress than ever. A national poll on children's health conducted in March 2021 by the University of Michigan reported that 46% of parents have noticed a new or worsening mental health condition for their teen since the start of the pandemic. Furthermore, 73% of parent report that COVID-19 has had a negative impact on their teen's ability to interact with their friends. Parents also reported that their teens had changes in sleep, were withdrawing from family, and showed aggressive behavior. Reports show that connectedness to school and community programs that help with coping and problem-solving skills can help improve mental health, which will be a function of the Well Spaces.

"There is so much work to do for our students' mental health," says LAEF Executive Director Carrie Logue. "Our next step is to partner with the district to build and furnish a Well Space at Los Alamitos High School. We welcome donations from the community to make this space a reality."

LAEF is the non-profit partner of Los Alamitos Unified School District. LAEF enhances educational excellence by providing after-school and summer enrichment programs to children in grades Pre-K to 12. LAEF impacts all students by providing significant funding for mental health and STEAM teachers/instruction, as well as igniting new programs and providing valuable

resources. For more information, visit [www.LAEF4Kids.org](http://www.LAEF4Kids.org) or call (562) 799-4700 Extension 80424 today.



LAEF presents the donation check to Los Al staff. Pictured from left to right: McAuliffe Principal Dr. Ryan Weiss-Wright, Oak Principal Erin Kominsky, LAEF Board Chair Tom Lent, LAEF Vice Chair Felicia Gonzalez, LAEF Executive Director Carrie Logue, Deputy Superintendent Ondrea Reed, Superintendent Dr. Andrew Pulver, Director of Special Ed and Mental Health Grace Delk, and Middle School Mental Health Counselor Dr. Kirsten Jensen.

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