

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**DATE:** April 19, 2019

**SUBJECT:** SAN DIEGUITO UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT Announces the  
2019 Teacher of the Year & Classified Employee of the Year

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**ENCINITAS – The San Dieguito Union High School District (SDUHSD) has named Matt Cunningham as its 2019 Teacher of the Year.**



Mr. Matt Cunningham began teaching in 1989 at San Dieguito High School and remained for 10 years before transferring to La Costa Canyon High School where he has been teaching for the last 21 years. Mr. Cunningham has taught all levels of high school English during his teaching career.

Mr. Cunningham is known for his total dedication to the success of his students, and his unwillingness to never give up on them. He has always shown a commitment to teaching the “whole child,” as opposed to simply delivering the curriculum. When Mr. Cunningham’s students are writing in class, he leads by example and does the same. He shares his passion for the written word with his students, and it is simply contagious. Mr. Cunningham has refused to rest on his laurels throughout his career. He embraces evaluations and critique, and is constantly looking for ways to better his instructional practice. Between Mr. Cunningham’s devotion to supporting students and continuing to better his craft, he has become an exemplary educator, and has been for many, many years.

Jill Lax said this, “Matt is one of the most passionate and outgoing teachers I’ve had the privilege of working with. He has not only inspired in my own two children a love of nonfiction, but with his expansive knowledge of so many writers and articles, he was able to reference a variety of sources that were awe-inspiring, forcing students to challenge their assumptions, rise to challenges, and take intellectual risks.” Matt also inspires students through his active involvement and sense of the dramatic from dressing up as Raskolnikov and narrating the character’s lines, to performing “Sinners of an Angry God”. Matt knows how to involve his students and get their attention. Every year he puts on a fabulous “Great Gatsby” party! For his EL students, he hosts a real Thanksgiving for them at school, complete with a large cooked turkey, etc.

Lauren Monahan states, "It's Matt Cunningham. Enough said. But really, he's reached out and saved more drowning kids in his long career than most of us can dream of, all while maintaining a high standard of excellence in his subject matter...proving that you don't have to sacrifice excellence to show your humanity and help kids in a meaningful way."

As the district winner, Cunningham will now advance to the San Diego County Employee of the Year Program administered by the San Diego County Office of Education and compete with other school district winners for the title of San Diego County Teacher of the Year.

**The San Dieguito Union High School District has named Debbie Johnson as its 2019 Classified Employee of the Year.**



Ms. Debbie Johnson, Administrative Assistant for Technology Services, has been with the district since 1993 and in her current role for over 18 years. Those who nominated her highlighted Ms. Johnson's "can do" attitude, patience, problem-solving skills, and student-focused service as some of the reasons she is an outstanding representative of classified employees. Joel Van Hooser, Director of Technology Services, states, "Debbie plays a vital role in the success of everyone in the district – staff and students. Even during the busiest times of the year, she always does whatever it takes, can multi-task consistently and never fails when the unexpected may happen."

As an Administrative Assistant, Ms. Johnson performs a broad range of duties including: explaining department policies and procedures, maintaining records, monitoring the technology budget, processing equipment orders and payments and many other tasks to support the director.

As the district recipient of this honor, Ms. Johnson will advance to the County Classified Employee of the Year Program administered by the San Diego County Office of Education.

Congratulations Mr. Matt Cunningham and Ms. Debbie Johnson and thank you for your dedicated service to our students!

*The San Dieguito Union High School District serves 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in the communities of Encinitas, Solana Beach, Del Mar, Cardiff, Rancho Santa Fe and surrounding areas. Covering 85 square miles, the district includes four high schools, five middle schools, and a continuation high school. Website: [www.sduhsd.net](http://www.sduhsd.net).*