

Town focus Rancho Santa Fe

SCHOOL DAYS

Educator has been at elementary school for 37 years

By Pat Stein

RANCHO SANTA FE — Call educator Glenda Sumida a "lifer." Now in her 37th year on staff at Rancho Santa Fe School, Sumida has served as the school's principal for 13 years.

Before that, she taught at the school for 22 years and headed the special projects department for two years between her classroom and administrative assignments.

But Sumida's history at the school began long before she started teaching there.

She went to fourth, fifth and sixth grade at Rancho Santa Fe School when it was still in the space now occupied by the Rancho Santa Fe Association.

Her teacher in all three grades was Helen Ross, mother of actress Marion Ross, who is probably best known as television mom Marion Cunningham on the sitcom "Happy Days."

"All three grades were in one classroom, and there were only about 25 students," Sumida said.

Her family lived in Rancho Santa Fe at the time, but later moved to Cardiff, where she attended Earl Warren Junior High School and San Diegoito High School, both of which were brand new when Sumida was a student.

After graduating from San Diegoito High, Sumida went to work as a secretary at Rancho Santa Fe School, where she said she was encouraged to enroll in college and get a teaching credential. Sumida graduated from San Francisco State University.

When she had the opportunity to teach second grade at the school that had been such an important part of her life, Sumida went for it.

"Some of the same teachers I had as a student were still on the staff, so it was a big change for me to start calling them by their first names instead of 'Miss' or 'Mrs.," Sumida said.

Over the years, Sumida has seen major changes in the Rancho Santa Fe community and school. For one thing, the student population of the school that teaches kindergartners through eighth grade has grown from less than 100 to 772.

"When I started teaching here, Rancho Santa Fe was still largely a retirement community, but now there are many younger families with children because Rancho Santa Fe is a wonderful place to raise a family, so



Rancho Santa Fe School Principal Glenda Sumida got a group hug from kindergartners at the school. She has been principal for 13 years. *Edward Contreras / Union-Tribune*

enrollment has grown," Sumida said.

Her mission as a teacher and principal has always been to provide students with the support and skills they need to succeed both academically and in life.

But she says her mission could not have been accomplished without the support of parents and district Superintendent K. Roger Rowe, who plans to retire soon.

"It will be a sad day when he leaves," Sumida said. "He's done a fantastic job."

In addition to her admiration for Rowe's leadership, Sumida says the level of community interest in educa-

tion and parental involvement is what makes Rancho Santa Fe School special.

"We have a lot of parent support," Sumida said. "Parents are very involved in education, and they get involved. They volunteer in the classrooms and library and drive on field trips. There's also a lot of communication between the school and the parents, so students get a lot of support at home."

In addition, the Parent-Teacher Organization funds smaller class sizes for fourth through eighth grade, special programs such as choral music, fine art, instrumental music, Spanish classes, computer lab and annual

events such as Science Discovery Day and Ocean Week, which features studies of the nearby tides and wetlands.

When she's not busy seeing that everything runs right at Rancho Santa Fe School, Sumida enjoys visiting Balboa Park museums, going to the theater and taking long weekends in San Francisco with her husband, who is an architect.

Pat Stein is a free-lance writer from Cardiff. Do you have a story idea for the Rancho Santa Fe? Contact **Robbie O'Hee** at (760) 476-8215 or robbi.oh@untrib.com.

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SPOTLIGHT

The Rancho Santa Fe Republican Women and the Del Mar Fairbanks Ranch and Golden Triangle Republican Women will honor all military veterans at a "Salute To America" event May 24 at

For more information, call Jody Bray at (858) 756-1906.

DATEBOOK

● **Planning meeting:** The San Diego Planning Group will meet at 6:45 p.m. tomorrow in the boardroom at Fire Station One, 6936 El Fuero. Information: (858) 756-5971.

for kindergartners through sixth graders with games, food, movies and hanging out with friends. The next Kid's Night Out will be 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. May 11. There will also be one June 8. The cost is \$25 per child or \$20 per child with three or more in the family. Children must be members of the community center to participate. Information and membership registration: (858) 756-2461.

756-2444, Ext. 103.

● **"Spring Fling":** The Helen Yen Woodard Animal Center is planning its 15th annual Spring Fling fund-raiser to be held June 9 in the Fairbanks Village Plaza. The theme is "Arabian Nights." Information: (858) 756-4877, Ext. 341, 350.

● **Yoga class:** A yoga class for adults will help to develop concentration and flexibility. The class is from 8:45 to 10 a.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays