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**MEDIA ALERT**

## **Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Is a Lucky Day for Hundreds of Santa Ana Kindergarten Students** *\*KinderCaminata Introduces Youngsters to Santa Ana College\**

**WHAT:** More than 1,000 Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD) kindergartners, 108 parents, and 34 teachers will embark on a unique journey as they visit college for the first time. The annual KinderCaminata program’s name was taken from the word “kinder,” meaning “children” in German paired with “caminata,” which is “to promenade” in Spanish.

The college visitors will enjoy more than 40 career stations that provide interactive exposure to a range of careers:

- The engineering department’s station will expose the youngsters to the latest technology. A robotic total station will interact with the children--the total station will follow the children as they hold a rod. Kindergartners will also get to hold GPS units and see how their coordinates change as they walk around.
- The dance department will excite youngsters with a display of Mexican folk costumes and a dance demonstration.
- Librarians will show an online story time, a puppet show, and distribute bookmarks.
- The Tessmann Planetarium will provide a solar system demonstration.
- The Orange County Sheriff’s Department, Santa Ana Fire Department, and the Santa Ana Police Department are also sure to please the kindergartners.

The youngsters will be entertained by performances by Relámpago del Cielo, a nonprofit cultural arts organization which supports the study and preservation of traditional Mexican folkloric dance, and the Santa Ana College Mariachi.

**WHERE:** Santa Ana College (SAC), 1530 W. 17<sup>th</sup> St., Santa Ana

**WHEN:** Friday, April 13, 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

**WHO:** An estimated 1,000 students from Santa Ana Unified School District, will visit SAC. Kindergartners from low-income areas are given priority for attendance. This year, students come from Roosevelt, Pio Pico, King, Sepulveda, Muir, Remington, and Lincoln Elementary Schools.

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The 2012 grand marshal will be Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana, Ph.D., SAUSD superintendent. In July 2011, Meléndez became superintendent of the SAUSD, the largest school district in Orange County with 56,000 students at 61 school sites throughout Santa Ana. The K-12 school district is the second largest employer in Santa Ana with approximately 4,500 educators and staff members. SAUSD boasts 28 California Distinguished Schools, five National Blue Ribbon Schools, and two 2011 National Blue Ribbon nominees.

Meléndez held the position of Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education at the United States Department of Education (USDOE) since 2009. Prior to her service to the USDOE, Meléndez served as superintendent for the Pomona Unified School District in Pomona, Calif. In 2009, her success as an education leader was recognized by the American Association of School Administrators, which voted her California Superintendent of the Year.

**WHY:** “Kindergartners attending schools that serve at-risk populations are introduced to the college environment through KinderCaminata,” said Erlinda J. Martinez, Ed.D., SAC college president. “The annual event helps the children and their parents realize that going to college is the natural next step after high school. Accessing higher education can indeed become a reality for all children living in Santa Ana.”

The event is traditionally held near or on the birth date (March 31) of Cesar Chavez, the renowned United Farm Workers leader. On the day of the event kindergartners are given caps with Chavez’s motto, “Sí, se puede” (Yes, you can).

**HOW:** Support that made the KinderCaminata event possible came from Smart & Final Stores and The Drip Coffee Cart.

KinderCaminata is a non-profit organization supported by an annual fundraising dinner, *Salute to Chancellors, Presidents, Superintendents*, organizations, community, colleges and university contributors. A volunteer board of directors composed of the four Orange County community college district chancellors, university, business and community leaders governs KinderCaminata.

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