

## Clothed in success— Students’ request for T-shirts pays off



**Doris Dickson Elementary fifth-grade students**

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By Dawn Marks

Fifth-grade students at Doris Dickson Elementary wear T-shirts given to them by Mt. San Antonio College and presented by its president, Bill Scroggins, following a letter request by the students. Mr. Scroggins stands with class teacher Art Baeza (far right). Principal Robert Whale is on the left.

After Doris Dickson Elementary School Principal Robert Whale announced a new college promotion campaign at the start of the school year, teaching staff came up with an idea to pay for college T-shirts that the students would wear on Mondays. “We figured if the parents couldn’t afford them, let’s just ask,” Mr. Whale said.

The entire student body of the Chino school participated in a letter writing campaign. Each wrote to their college of choice. Some colleges replied with pennants, some with letters, and some sent T-shirts, the principal said.

Each student in the fifth-grade class of Art Baeza wrote a letter to their teacher’s alma mater, Mount San Antonio College. They were rewarded with shirts that were special ordered to their size and a classroom visit from Mt. SAC president William Scroggins.

“With this college writing campaign you never know what is going to happen. Kids see first hand that communication with organizations makes things happen,” Mr. Whale said.

Mt. SAC director of public affairs Jill Dolan said the college is committed to helping students from surrounding low-income communities, many of whom would be the first in their families to attend college.

That is the challenge at Dickson, said Mr. Whale, confirming that many Dickson students don't realize that college is an attainable goal for them.

Dickson's Commitment to Excellence program was instituted last fall to reinforce the idea that college is within reach of all students, especially those who may not be getting that message at home.

Mr. Scroggins said it's critical that elementary school children have exposure to colleges and opportunities to visit a college campus. Mt. SAC has a dedicated department for young students called the College for Kids program and an Inside the Outdoors program that provides science and social science programs for grades kindergarten through 4, he said.

Students in Mr. Baeza's class greeted the college president in the style learned in the Commitment to Excellence program, "I'm excellent. How are you?" they said in unison.

"How many of you have visited Mt. SAC on a field trip last year?" asked Mr. Scroggins. Most students raised their hands. "We want you to be visibly part of college," he told the class of 30 fifth-graders. "Someday you might say that not only did you go to Mt. SAC, but Mt. SAC came to you," he said.

He explained how the path to college begins in elementary school. "You have to pay attention in class, you have to read, and do your homework every day."

Mr. Scroggins has been responsible for California's largest single-campus community college district since 2011. Mt. SAC has 2,900 employees and serves more than 60,000 students annually on a 420-acre campus, located in Walnut.

