



NEWS – ORANGE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

For Immediate Release

Information: Superintendent's Office (714) 628-4487



HANDY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER ANNOUNCED AS “NATIONAL LIFE GROUP LIFECHANGER OF THE YEAR” RECIPIENT

ORANGE, Calif., (March 26, 2018) – Handy Elementary School second-and-third grade teacher Mary Ann Ballestero received a surprise today during her school's student awards assembly, when National Life Group representative Kristin Stroth was introduced and announced that Ballestero had been selected, from among 825 teachers, administrators and school district employees nationwide, as a 2017-18 “National Life Group LifeChanger of the Year.”

Ballestero was nominated for the award last August by school principal Dr. Michelle Owen, for her active involvement and commitment to the school, where she not only teaches but also volunteers for fundraising and extracurricular events and works to help students and families in need.

“Ms. Ballestero seeks out opportunities to help her colleagues find resources and materials for all grade levels, from field trip funding and book labeling, to helping with flexible seating and finding inexpensive incentives for students,” said Dr. Owen. “Additionally, she collects donations from the community around Christmas time to ensure that struggling families are able to celebrate as well.”

LifeChanger of the Year is an annual program that began in 2006 to recognize K-12 educators and school employees across the country. The program celebrates those who are making a significant difference in the lives of students by exemplifying excellence, positive influence and leadership. It is sponsored and run by [National Life Group](#) and the National Life Group Foundation. To be considered for the award, nominees must:

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**Handy Elementary School Teacher Named “National Life Group LifeChanger of the Year”
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- Make a positive impact in the lives of students
- Enhance their school or district’s atmosphere, culture and pride
- Demonstrate exemplary leadership at the school and/or district level
- Possess a proven record of professional excellence
- Show commitment to building a nurturing environment that supports learning
- Adhere to the highest moral and ethical standards

As one of only 15 “LifeChanger of the Year” recipients nationwide, Ballestero was not only honored at her school but also presented with a certificate of commendation and a \$3,000 award, which will be split between Ballestero and Handy Elementary School.

“When I think of someone who gives freely of herself, to assist and serve others, Ms. Ballestero immediately comes to mind,” said Dr. Owen. “She is the embodiment of a life changer and I am grateful for all that she does for our students and families, our school and our community.”

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