

Cathedral City street named after teacher Jessica Pack

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(Photo: Crystal Chatham, The Desert Sun)

CATHEDRAL CITY – As students cheered, a sharp tug yanked a black plastic bag off of a street sign, revealing a new sign, mounted to the top of the pole. It read “Jessica Pack.”

During a short ceremony on Thursday morning, officials from Cathedral City renamed San Eljay, a short street in front of James Workman Middle School, to honor Jessica Pack, a sixth grade teacher.

In November, Pack was chosen from more than 260,000 California educators to become one of the state's “Teachers of the Year” for 2014. Pack is the first Palm Springs Unified School District teacher to win the award in at least 23 years.

The street sign will bear Pack's name for at least a year, Cathedral City Mayor Kathy DeRosa said. The mayor also declared Thursday “Jessica Pack Day.”

“Jessica, thank you for who you are, for all you've done, and all the inspiration you've given these young students,” DeRosa said a moment before the new street sign was unveiled. “Keep up the good work.”

The street renaming was ceremonial only, DeRosa said. For all official purposes, the road will remain San Eljay.

On Thursday morning, Pack's class led her into the parking lot as students cheered on the street corner.

After the sign was unveiled, dozens of students swarmed the teacher for a school-sized group hug.

“It's amazing,” Pack said afterward, tongue-tied with emotion.

“This is a big moment, and I wouldn't want to share it with anyone but my students.”

Pack teaches language arts, social studies and a class that combines student government and video production. She also heads the James Workman Audio Visual Club.

In June, Pack led a districtwide teacher training on the new “Bring Your Own Device” initiative that encourages students to bring their laptops, tablets and smartphones for use in the classroom.

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Pack's video production students also have dominated the Digicom Film Festival since its inception five years ago.

On the Web

Visit this story at mydesert.com/education to view a video of the unveiling of the street sign in Cathedral City bearing Jessica Pack's name.

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