

La Mesan Of The Year

- Posted by [La Mesa Today](#) on January 1, 2013 at 9:30am
- [View Blog](#)



Education Innovators Leading The Way

LA MESA -- Visiting the modest campus of La Mesa's College Preparatory Middle School, it is clear from the moment you arrive that this is a focused institution.

There are few frills.

No gym. No lunchroom. The students, their mascot is the Tiger, are dressed in uniforms and move quietly between church basement classrooms that often have no windows. Yet no one is complaining.

And in 2011, these 200 or so students produced [test scores](#) that put this school in rarified air, among the best in San Diego County.

In an age crying out for educational innovation and in need of the entrepreneurial spirit, this charter school is still too young to declare it the answer to all challenges, but the hard work and sacrifice its founders have put in on this community's behalf make them worthy of being named La Mesans of the Year for 2012.



Anyone driving down Jackson Drive on La Mesa's southeast side can see the cars of **Christina Callaway and Mitchell Miller** (and their staff) in the school's parking lot at all hours. In addition to pursuing their educational goals, these school co-directors have had to learn a lot about local politics and zoning laws in securing even this modest location for their school. The process was not always smooth, but while building a curriculum and recruiting student families to their vision, they made their way through noise and traffic concerns which have been managed. The gains on the educational front have been clearer, with a long line of cars from throughout La Mesa and East County making the effort to get there each day.

In a [recent interview](#) about the school's high test scores, Miller credited family involvement with the school's early success.

"This isn't an issue of school location or student population but an issue of school expectations and accountability," he said. "We work closely with our families to assist them in supporting their children as many families are unaware of how best to support their children."

Some do see the charter school movement as a threat to the financial stability of traditional school districts. Each student that attends a charter like College Preparatory Middle, does drain some resources from the district school that student might otherwise have attended. But watching this school's early growth and success suggests there is more at play here. If the recent decision by the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District to study adding "magnet" programs wasn't inspired by College Prep's success, it certainly could have been.

For moving this discussion forward in a concrete and constructive way, Callaway and Miller are 2012's La Mesans of the Year.

[CLICK HERE](#) to see the full list of 2012 nominees.

