



PRESS RELEASE

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June 1, 2026

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEAL BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT LAUNCHES INAUGURAL SAFETY SEAL PROGRAM AT MCGAUGH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Seal Beach, CA – The Seal Beach Police Department proudly concluded the inaugural year of the **Safety Seal Program** at McGaugh Elementary School, a first-of-its-kind partnership designed to teach traffic safety, emergency preparedness, wellness, and positive community engagement through hands-on learning experiences.

The Safety Seal Program was developed and delivered by the Seal Beach Police Department in partnership with McGaugh Elementary School. During its inaugural year, McGaugh became the first and only elementary school in the Los Alamitos Unified School District to participate in a program of this kind. Throughout the 2025-2026 school year, approximately 680 students participated in three interactive Safety Seal sessions held in November, March, and May.

Unlike traditional classroom presentations, the Safety Seal Program transformed physical education classes into immersive learning experiences. During each session, the Seal Beach Police Department effectively "took over" PE classes for the entire grade level, creating multiple stations where students interacted directly with members of the department's Community Oriented Policing (COP) Team, Traffic Bureau, patrol officers, detectives, professional staff, and senior volunteers.

"The Safety Seal Program brought learning to life for our students in a way that was engaging, memorable, and meaningful," said Principal Wendy Wood. "Through hands-on activities and repeated interactions throughout the year, our students learned important safety skills while building trust and familiarity with the people who serve and protect our community. This partnership has created lasting memories for our students and strengthened the connection between McGaugh Elementary and the Seal Beach Police Department."

The program's success was made possible through the support of McGaugh Elementary teachers, staff, and administrators, who partnered with the Seal Beach Police Department throughout the school year.

Session One: Traffic Safety

The first Safety Seal session, held in November, focused on traffic, bicycle, and pedestrian safety.

Students learned the importance of wearing helmets and seatbelts, safely navigating crosswalks, bicycle safety, pedestrian awareness, and what to do when emergency vehicles approach. Officers taught students the importance of moving safely to the right when emergency lights and sirens are activated, helping reinforce safe habits that can protect both motorists and first responders.

Rather than simply hearing about traffic safety in a classroom, students learned through movement and play. Using basketball and soccer drills, students learned how to recognize and respond to traffic signs by adjusting their speed and actions to red stop signs, yellow caution signs, green lights, and school zone speed limits. Students also participated in relay races where they practiced properly fitting bicycle helmets, rode tricycles through designated courses, and sprinted to waiting police vehicles to correctly secure their seatbelts with the guidance and encouragement of police personnel.

These engaging activities transformed important safety lessons into memorable experiences, helping students build habits that can keep them safe whether they are walking, biking, or traveling in a vehicle.

Session Two: Help Happens Here – Understanding 9-1-1

The second session, held in March, focused on emergency preparedness and the proper use of 9-1-1.

Students learned the critical role 9-1-1 plays in the community and why emergency services should only be used for true emergencies when immediate police, fire, or medical assistance is needed. Through age-appropriate discussions and hands-on activities, students learned how to recognize an emergency, when to call 9-1-1, what information dispatchers need, and how to remain calm while speaking with emergency personnel.

One of the most popular activities allowed students to practice reporting emergencies while sitting inside a police car using the radio microphone. As part of a soccer sprint team relay race, students took turns providing their name, location, and type of emergency while communicating directly with officers, helping build confidence and communication skills in a realistic setting.

To reinforce these lessons beyond the classroom, every student received a 9-1-1 educational bookmark and a cellphone-shaped reference card containing important information to remember when calling emergency services. The materials were provided by **911 For Kids** (www.911forkids.com) and served as practical reminders for students and their families about how to communicate effectively during an emergency.

The hands-on experience helped students understand not only how to call for help, but also the responsibility that comes with using the emergency system appropriately.

Session Three: Fit for Life

The third and final session, held in May, focused on overall wellness, physical fitness, and healthy decision-making.

Students explored the importance of physical fitness, mental wellness, nutrition, healthy eating habits, sleep, exercise, and making positive choices. The session culminated with a SWAT-style physical fitness challenge where students tested their strength, endurance, teamwork, and perseverance while learning proper form for sit-ups, push-ups, and squats – the same foundational exercises used by law enforcement officers to maintain fitness throughout their careers.

Adding to the excitement, members of the West County SWAT Team brought the armored BearCat rescue vehicle to campus, allowing students a special photo opportunity and an up-close look at specialized law enforcement equipment.

The timing of the final session made the experience especially meaningful for McGaugh's fifth-grade students, who completed the Fit for Life session during the week before their elementary school promotion ceremony. As students prepared to leave elementary school and begin their next chapter, the program's lessons about resilience, healthy choices, perseverance, and personal growth aligned perfectly with the transition to middle school.

A Department-Wide Commitment

The success of the Safety Seal Program was made possible by personnel from every corner of the Seal Beach Police Department.

Throughout the school year, 45 unique department employees and volunteers participated in one or more Safety Seal sessions, including patrol officers, detectives, traffic investigators, SWAT personnel, Community Oriented Policing Team members, Senior Community Service Officers, Police Aides, and Volunteers in Police Service.

For a department with only 39 sworn officers and approximately 70 total personnel, the level of participation was extraordinary. Nearly two-thirds of the entire organization

contributed to the program, representing a true department-wide commitment to investing in the safety, education, and well-being of Seal Beach's youngest residents.

The program's impact extended beyond the students. In a profession often focused on emergencies, critical incidents, and helping people through some of the most difficult moments of their lives, the opportunity to spend time with children in a positive and engaging environment provided a meaningful reminder of why many chose a career in public service. The laughter, energy, and enthusiasm displayed throughout each session proved beneficial not only for the students, but also for the officers, professional staff members, and volunteers who participated.

SBPD Police Officers Association President and Traffic Investigator James Dowdell shared, "While the program was designed for the students, I think many of the officers got just as much out of it. Spending time with the kids, seeing their excitement, and building those relationships was refreshing. It reminded us that policing is about more than responding to emergencies – it's about being part of this special community."

More Than a Safety Program

While the Safety Seal Program was designed to teach important life skills, one of its most significant outcomes was the relationships built throughout the year.

What department personnel witnessed from November to May was remarkable. Students who may have initially viewed officers, staff members, and volunteers as strangers came to know them as people they recognized, trusted, and looked forward to seeing. They eagerly sought out conversations, high-fives, and hugs, and viewed department personnel as trusted adults in their community.

Children who were initially hesitant became enthusiastic participants. By the final session, students greeted officers and staff members by name and often sought hand-held escorts back to class after activities concluded. What began as safety education evolved into genuine relationships built on trust, familiarity, and mutual respect.

For many participants, the greatest success of the program was not what students learned about traffic safety, emergency preparedness, or healthy living - it was the connections they formed with the people behind the badge.

Community Support Makes It Possible

At the conclusion of the final session, all 680 McGaugh students received a commemorative blue Safety Seal Program T-shirt.

The shirts were made possible through generous donations from the Seal Beach Police Officers Association, Seal Beach Police Management Association, SBPD Volunteers in

Police Service, the Seal Beach Police League, and the McGaugh Elementary PTA, each contributing \$1,000 toward the project.

The shirts were produced by **Caprimura Customs**, which provided the shirts at cost and absorbed additional expenses beyond the donated funds, including taxes, shipping, and other associated costs.

One unexpected moment occurred after the final session when fifth-grade students received their Safety Seal Program T-shirts. With graduation just one week away, students gathered after school with Sharpies in hand, collecting classmates' signatures on their shirts as keepsakes of their graduating class, their elementary school experience, and the inaugural year of the Safety Seal Program.

"As both a police lieutenant and a parent of three elementary school children, I understand how important it is for children to feel safe, supported, and connected to the adults in their community," said Lieutenant Julia Clasby. "The Safety Seal Program demonstrates what can happen when a police department and a school work together with a shared goal of investing in children.

For a department our size, this program represented an incredible investment of time, energy, and personnel. While we set out to teach safety, preparedness, and wellness, what we gained was something equally important: relationships. Watching students grow more comfortable, confident, and connected with our officers and staff throughout the year was incredibly rewarding. We hope the lessons they learned stay with them for years to come."

As the inaugural year comes to a close, the Seal Beach Police Department looks forward to continuing and expanding the Safety Seal Program, ensuring future generations of McGaugh students receive the same opportunities to learn, engage, and build positive relationships with those who serve their community.

Building trust, safety, and connection – one classroom at a time.

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