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For Immediate Release

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Nonprofit kicks off drive for arson-damaged playgrounds

Donations sought to offset costs of replacing playground structures at Caroline Wenzel and John Sloat schools

September 3, 2013 (Sacramento): Sacramento Unified Education Foundation – SCUSD’s official nonprofit organization – kicked off fundraising for two arson-damaged playgrounds today at Caroline Wenzel Elementary School.

The group received a total of \$4,000 in donations and pledges at the morning event:

- \$1,000 from City Councilman Steve Cohn on behalf of Rebuild McKinley – the group that raised money to fund construction of a new playground at McKinley Park following an arson fire there on July 28, 2012
- \$1,000 from SCUSD Board of Education Vice President Darrel Woo
- \$1,000 from City Councilwoman Bonnie Pannell
- \$1,000 from Caroline Wenzel’s PTA.

“We are so grateful for these generous contributions,” said SCUSD Superintendent Jonathan Raymond. “Our fundraising has a ways to go, but we have a wonderfully supportive community that I believe will help us get our kids playing again.”

Earlier this summer, playground structures at Wenzel and John Sloat Elementary School were set ablaze. Damage was extensive and both structures were removed for safety reasons. Last week, Sacramento Fire Department in conjunction with the Sacramento Police Department made an arrest in connection with the crimes. Although SCUSD is moving swiftly to replace the structures, the schools opened on Tuesday without them.

The district's insurance deductible is \$25,000 for each incident. Without donations, that \$50,000 will come out of the general fund budget, further hampering the district's work to rebound from recessionary budget cuts. Community members can donate to the Sacramento Unified Education Foundation by visiting the organization's Facebook page – www.facebook.com/SCUSDfoundation.

"The loss of these structures is heartbreaking to all of us," said Raymond. "Our team is doing everything they can to fix this crisis but we need help from the community."

On July 31, a neighbor of John Sloat Elementary School reported to Sacramento Fire Department that the playground structure was on fire. The extent of damage caused by the blaze required removal of the entire structure. Fire officials later confirmed that the fire was deliberately set.

The following night, on August 1, the playground structure at Caroline Wenzel Elementary School in the Pocket neighborhood was set ablaze. Although the damage was not as extensive as that of the John Sloat incident, the structure was torn down for safety reasons.

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