

A GOOD KIND OF BUST

Students honor drug agent for Red Ribbon Week

By DAVID JAMES HEISS
Staff Writer

REDLANDS — Lugonia School will always have a reminder of the good fight, right in their library.

Monday morning, the school unveiled a sculpture of Enrique "Kiki" Camarena, the former Drug Enforcement Agency undercover officer who was kidnapped, tortured and killed while on assignment in Guadalajara, Mexico, in early 1985.

Camarena's bust was donated by the Association of Former Federal Narcotics Agents to Lugonia School, according to Camarena's widow, Mika Camarena, who was one of several special guests at the ceremony.

"I was his high school sweetheart," Mrs. Camarena told students Monday. "When I was 16, he told me two secrets: 'I want to marry you' — he was 17 — and, 'I want to be an agent.'"

"So you see, at a young age he knew what he wanted in life. He reached out and went for it. He accomplished so much. He was not a quitter; he held on right 'til the end, and he was not held back by anyone."

Camarena also worked as a firefighter and a police investigator, she said, before becoming a drug enforcement agent.

She thanked Lugonia School for all its efforts in commemorating Camarena's work and "for doing everything you can to celebrate Red Ribbon Week," which began Oct. 23.

"Kiki gave his life to make each of us drug free," said principal Kathy Jeide. "Whenever you see Mr. Camarena, you'll remind yourself to 'say no' if anyone offers you drugs."

Mika Camarena later commented: "The sculpture is a symbol. It's Kiki's face, but it's a reminder to all about our drug enforcement agents, past and present, that Kiki's work continues. Lugonia is the second school to receive a bust of Kiki. Wouldn't it be nice to have one in



DAVID JAMES HEISS/Redlands Daily Facts

Bust of Enrique "Kiki" Camarena is donated to Lugonia School as a reminder of the importance of the fight against drugs.

every school and public library?"

Camarena said that Bonney L. Garcia Elementary School in El Paso, Texas, received the first sculpture of her husband just recently.

Camarena's sisters, Niki Jimenez and Myrna Camarena, were both special guests, as was retired Lugonia fifth-grade teacher Diana Holly, whose students have campaigned the U.S. Postal Service to design a stamp to commemorate Camarena's heroism.

Members of the Fire Department and Police Department and representatives from the school district office were at the ceremony, as were three drug enforcement agents, including Steve Azzam, assistant special agent-in-charge at the

Riverside DEA office.

"Their Red Ribbon Week program and Mrs. Holly's efforts to commemorate the tragic death of Kiki shows what a community can do," said Azzam. "It's good when children can see what ultimate sacrifice Agent Camarena made. He was a real hero."

Myrna Camarena commented that "Lugonia has been very active in Red Ribbon Week, and very active in getting a stamp designed for Kiki. I've been here on several occasions, and it's almost like home to me."

Camarena said that her brother's bust was designed using actual photographs of him, and that it was "a very close resemblance."