

the

WINTER 2013

Independent

Barbara Harrison, Editor

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OPIS Student Body Assists With International Gala

“To celebrate cultural diversity and promote global citizenship”



Board member, Sepideh Yeoh above, and
OPIS student body below, discuss plans for
the International Gala

The OPIS Student Body has joined with OPUSD board member, Sepideh Yeoh, in planning the **4th Annual International Gala**. This family event, scheduled for Friday, May 3 from 5:30-7:30, was established as a family/community fundraiser at Red Oak Elementary four years ago. Since then, participation has grown to include student performances from various campuses in Oak Park. One of the beauties of having such a small district is the ability to plan and promote district-wide events. The Committee is proud to announce that this year's International Gala will be held in the Pavilion of Oak Park High School.

The event includes Indian, Chinese, Persian, Armenian, and other cultural performances, a fashion show showcasing clothing from around the globe, a sampling of international foods, and a Chinese auction, representing the generosity and support of our community.

OPIS high school students are busy making a video to publicize the event.

Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children and will be available in mid March. For reservations, or to obtain more information, please contact Sepideh Yeoh at Sepideh@inspiredbysepideh.com.





Message from the Principal

Greeting to all OPIS parents and students. I want you to know how much I enjoy

seeing you when I visit the three OPIS classrooms. Independent School is truly preparing students for the 21st Century. I find it so exciting and enriching to observe our elementary school parents and students engaged in learning. I reflect on how rewarding it must be for parent and child to have such special time together at home. When I visit with the middle and high school students, I observe the personalized educational experiences taking place and the development of independent learners. I am so pleased to see our school growing in numbers. With an enrollment of over 180 students, we are reaching more and more students from diverse backgrounds, with a variety of reasons for choosing Independent School.

In March, our school will have the opportunity to share this success and to submit our plan to become even more effective. OPIS is in the process of becoming accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). A team of educators will visit us from March 17-20, 2013. Teachers and staff are meeting each week to examine student data and to develop goals to promote success for all students. Our Site Council parents are also involved in the WASC process and will meet with the Visiting Committee.

We will be sure to inform the WASC Visiting Team about our enhanced high school science lab program taught by Oak View science

instructor, Nicole Simmons. High school students enrolled in Biology, Chemistry and Physics are participating in exciting hands-on labs each week. Student feedback has been outstanding. We will be expanding this program for the next school year.

Continuing with our information about the WASC process, please know that our overall educational outcomes for all students are known as *Global Learning Goals*. These goals are listed below. Please take a moment to review them for us.

Additionally, please enjoy the entire newsletter filled with exciting stories about our students and our school!

Lou Tabone, Principal



Oak Park Independent School's

Global Learning Goals

The goal of Oak Park Independent School is to develop:

- Effective Communicators
- Self-directed Students
- Creative and Critical Thinkers and
- Healthy and Productive Citizens

Lake Cachuma



Flanked by the picturesque Santa Ynez and San Rafael Mountains, beautiful Lake Cachuma was the destination of our November field trip. On a brisk fall day, our families embarked on a spectacular boat ride with a knowledgeable guide who pointed out the many natural wonders of this area. We saw a variety of birds of many colors and sizes. Although we didn't see any migrating bald eagles, we were treated to the appearance of a rare white pelican. Also grazing on the shoreline, we saw three deer and some cows!

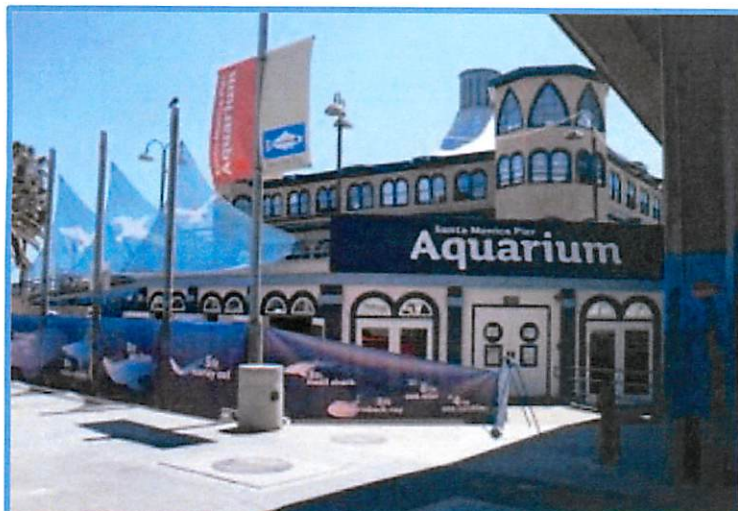


Following the boat ride, our group toured the Neal Taylor Nature Center that featured wonderful displays of the Chumash Indians who once inhabited the area. Also on display were trees, wildflowers and shrubs of chaparral, oak woodlands, and riparian habitats that surround the lake. Of particular interest to the students were stuffed specimens of a variety of animals and birds, including a huge bear. Students were given a list of questions to answer as they browsed the displays and were encouraged to experience the many hands-on items. We were all impressed with the quality of the exhibits and the knowledgeable and helpful staff.

Lastly, our guide took us on a short hike in which we learned about many of the area's plants and how the Chumash used them for medicinal purposes. We saw evidence of some of the area's animals, including a huge pack rat nest.

One of our families was lucky enough to camp at the lake for the long weekend. After touring the spacious yurts with amazing lake views, many of our students expressed an interest in staying too! Maybe next year!

Heal the Bay, Santa Monica Aquarium



December's field trip destination was the **Heal the Bay Aquarium** tucked under the Santa Monica Pier under the carousel. On a picture-perfect day, OPIS had the aquarium to ourselves. We were free to explore the aquarium with plenty of volunteers on hand to answer our many questions.

The aquarium is home to over 100 species of marine animals and plants, all native to the Santa Monica Bay. Some sea animals such as sea stars, anemones, and even sharks were accessible for our students to touch. On display were several species of fish, sea horses and octopi. There were even skulls of large marine mammals.

After an hour of intense exploration, our group was ushered into a classroom where we received an hour-long lesson on marine habitats. We learned about the ecosystems of the coast, the kelp forests and the deep ocean. An enormous whale rib dwarfed Kiara Gamboa and Madison Goetze had the honor of kissing a sea slug for good luck!



Heal the Bay



The Larrivee Guitar Factory

By Sawyer Sipes, 6th Grade

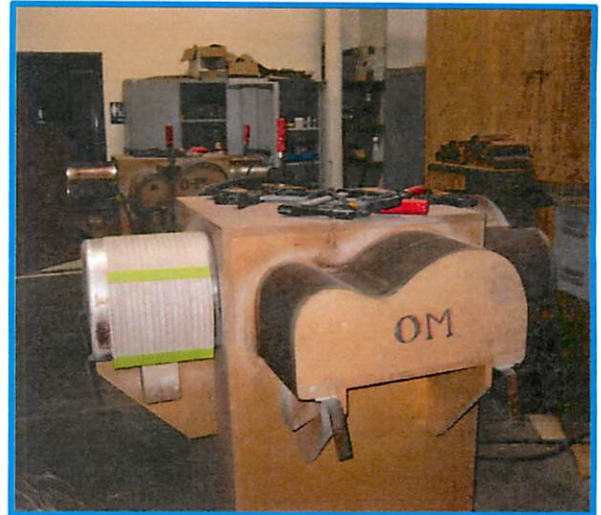
On January 15th some OPIS students, teachers, parents and siblings went to the Larrivee Guitar Company factory in Oxnard for a field trip. We were there to learn about how the Larrivee company makes their guitars.

When we entered the building, we split into two groups because the factory was small. The first step in making an acoustic guitar is to bend the frame into the right shape. The thin wood is placed on a hot metal mold that shapes the guitar in about 45 minutes. In a room nearby, workers were clamping together the two sides of the frame. In a room next to that, small pieces of wood were being clamped on the frame to keep the sides together. We exited that room and our tour guide brought out a finished guitar base with a top and bottom on it. He let us touch and feel it – it felt rough but later we saw how they smoothed it out using sand paper.

We also entered a room where the tops and bottoms were made. We weren't allowed to touch them because the glue was drying but we did get to touch a top piece with the glue dried on it already. There were piles of guitar tops everywhere! After leaving that room we saw the worker making and attaching the necks of the guitars. It was interesting to find out that Larrivee guitars have intricate designs made of abalone on the top of the guitar necks. We next saw the guitar fronts, which had abalone rings around the holes. I was very interested in the abalone – it was bluer than most abalone I have seen.

Then we got to touch a newly made guitar neck that was also very rough. We moved onto the sanding tables that have vents inside that suck up the sawdust

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Hot metal molds shape the guitars



Wood is glued inside the guitars



Intricate designs rim the opening

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so that it's not floating around in the air as to not hurt the workers' lungs. Our tour guide also showed us the electric guitar bottoms as well – they looked like they were made of plastic because they were so shiny and colorful.

We then got to see the painting and varnishing rooms and then the drying machine which was a cylinder that spun around almost instantly drying the guitar pieces.

After that we went to a room where workers were adding abalone and other decorations. It smelled terrible in there! I think it was the chemicals in the adhesives, though I can't be sure. Our tour guide showed us a panel of abalone with the designs already cut and they could be peeled and pushed out of the sheet.

We saw amazing looking designs on the top of the guitar necks that were made of abalone – they depicted women and snakes and little swirly things in the neck of the guitar. The next step was the guitar buffers, which were spinning very, very fast. The buffers made the guitar finish more shiny and smooth.

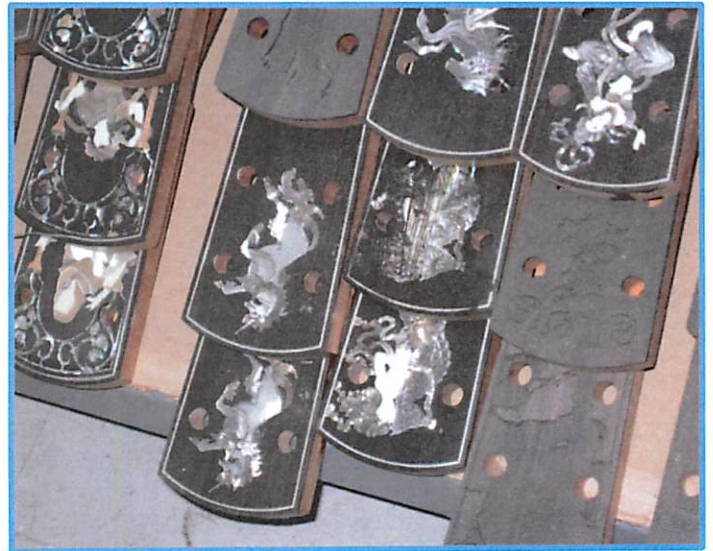
We moved on to one of the final steps where workers were adding the strings. The final step was to tune the guitars and we saw workers playing each individual string on the guitar to tune it perfectly. Before we left, all of the kids took a picture together at the front of the factory.

I think that the field trip was interesting and fun. I hope to go back sometime and check out the things I didn't get to see. The Larrivee Guitar factory is a very fun place to visit.

Photos: Top: Electric guitars drying on a rack

Middle: Intricate abalone neck designs

Bottom: Danny O'Brien, Rosalyn and Elianna Sokoler, Josiah and Sharon Hasegawa and Jean Larrivee, founder of the guitar company.



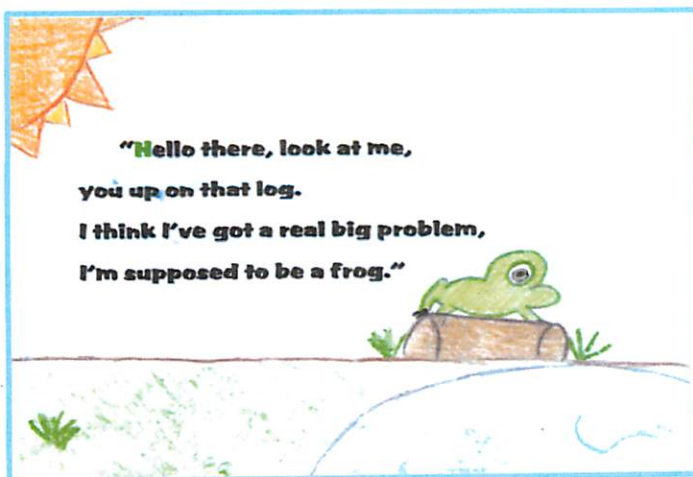
Spotlight on Students

Kelsey Anderson

OPIS junior, Kelsey Anderson, and her sister, Marlee, who is in third grade at Red Oak, have been busy illustrating a children's book called *The Adventures of Frizzy Frog*. The story is about a frog named Frizzy who is very different from the rest of his family, so he travels downstream looking for adventure and self-discovery. He is a funny-looking creature but the book's message is to convey that beauty lies within.

What is so special about this book is that the girls' grandfather, George C. Anderson, wrote it along with a series of other books and nursery rhymes. Tragically, he died in March, 2012 before any of his works were published. But Kelsey and Marlee have vowed to fulfill their grandfather's dream by illustrating the book and working to get it published in his memory.

The author, George C. Anderson, was the head trainer for both the Oakland Raiders and the Greenbay Packers. In addition to writing children's literature, he invented the Knee Stabilizer. Here is a page from their book:



Griffen Hamilton



My name is Griffen Hamilton and I'm in the 6th grade. This is my first year at OPIS, and I love it. I feel like I'm learning so much more than I did before I started school here and I have more time to do what I love best - ACTING.

When I was five, I was in my first musical, "Mary Poppins," as Kite Boy number 1. Ha-ha, actors will get that! Since then I have been in over 30 productions. Regular school only gave me enough time to be in a few shows a year.

Now I'm actually performing or in rehearsal for four shows at the same time, and I'm lucky enough to have principal roles. These are some of the current things I'm working on. You can see me in "Beauty and the Beast," at the new theatre at Agoura High School, March 15-16. While doing that, I'm in another production of "Beauty and the Beast." Luckily I'm the guy with the candlesticks in both shows. I'm also Linus in the kids' production of "You're a Good Man Charlie

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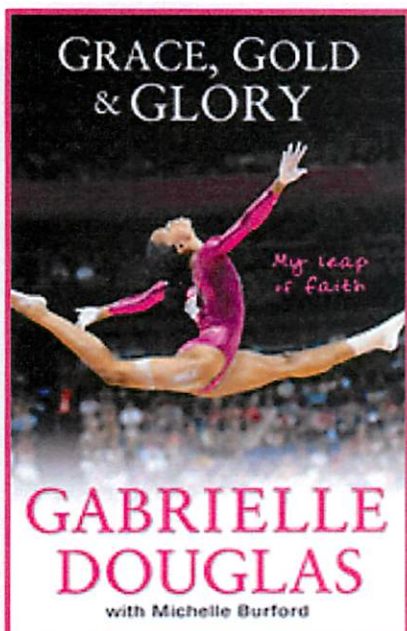
Brown,” with Cabrillo Theatre, and I’m rehearsing for “Guys and Dolls.”

I’m working hard to continue professionally with my career and I’m excited for any opportunity I might get. Recently I even got a taste of what it’s like to be on TV - on “The Neighbors,” as Country Club Kid number 1. Oh well, you’ve got to start somewhere!



Griffen Hamilton in his role as Lumiere
in “Beauty and the Beast”

Gabby Douglas Publishes Her First Book



Olympic Gold medalist, Gabby Douglas

“A must-read for teen athletes,” “Such an inspiring story,” “Awesome book for teens and parents,” “One great and heart-warming story” - these are among the hundred 5-star reviews of *Grace, Gold & Glory*, by gold medalist, Gabby Douglas. The autobiography details Gabby’s journey from a 6-year-old beginning gymnast to the first woman ever to earn a gold medal in both team and individual performances in the same Olympics.

Gabrielle has used her notoriety to inspire millions with a powerful message: With hard work and persistence, any dream is possible.

OPIS is honored that Gabby has chosen OPIS as her school of choice! We wish her continued success in her gymnastics career and look forward to reading her book.



Football Sensation, Luca Bruno, Signs with Arizona

According to scout.com, Oak Park High School defensive tackle and OPIS student, **Luca Bruno**, has just signed with the University of Arizona to play football. Luca had to decide between 15 scholarship offers! Way to go, Luca! Best of luck to you in your college career.



Pawville Pups Rescue

"Giving Pups a Second Chance"

by Allison Mulville, OPIS 7th grader

PawVille Pups Rescue is a puppy rescue committed to all different types of breeds of puppies from 8 weeks to 1 year. We are entirely a family-run, foster-based, volunteer organization. We primarily work off of the kill lists at surrounding high kill shelters. We also help those dogs who have been abandoned, abused, neglected or have lost their homes/families. All of our puppies are up to date on vaccinations, dewormed, and spayed/neutered by 6 months of age.

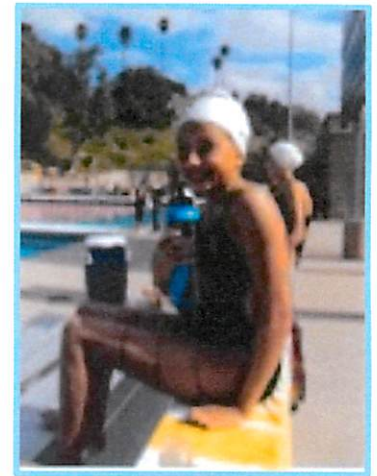
Our pups are fostered in wonderful foster homes. They get individualize socialization with other dogs, cats, children, and a warm, and loving home environment. We have many wonderful families that donate and volunteer their precious time to these pups in need. And we want to encourage everybody to adopt from a rescue, because every pup deserves a second chance! If you're interested in a new puppy, please contact us! ~PawVille Pups Rescue (805) 368-4110
<http://www.pawvillepups.org/>



Sweetheart is a lab mix who is available for adoption at Pawville Pups Rescue



Bianca Hofstatter Advances in Synchronized Swimming Trials



Few sports are as misunderstood as synchronized

swimming, formerly known as "water ballet". It is a hybrid of swimming, dance and gymnastics. Though the smiling swimmers make their routines look graceful, their performance is anything but effortless. "Sync" as it is sometimes called, requires tremendous flexibility, strength and stamina. Just ask **Bianca Hofstatter**.

Bianca's days often begin with a 4:00 AM wake-up call followed by two hours of stroke training at the Calabasas High School pool. Another twelve hours a week are spent at the San Fernando pool. Once a week, Bianca and her mom, Gerlinde, travel to Riverside at 6:00 AM to train for three more hours with a former Olympic coach. Weekends are set-aside for four hours of training with Olympian, Ali Williams. And that's just pool time. Additionally Bianca daily spends one hour stretching, one hour strength training and ½ hour on land-routine training. To top it off there are three hours of ballet per week.

All of this hard work paid off on February 16 as Bianca competed in the

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National Team Trials for USA Synchro in Mesa, Arizona. Well over fifty 11- and 12-year-olds traveled from all over the nation to earn a position on the National Synchro team. Forty-eight made the first cut and Bianca was one of 24 to make the final cut.

What does this mean for Bianca? Three more grueling months of training! Between now and May, Bianca will be learning a national routine which she will perform in Walnut Creek in May, in hopes of securing a position on the national team.

We congratulate Bianca on her outstanding achievement and wish her continued success in her quest to be a national team member and, ultimately, an Olympian!



The lines drawn on Bianca's legs help the judges determine the height she is able to project her body out of the water.

OPIS is Growing!

Welcome new families! OPIS is happy to announce that our student population is continuing to grow. In fact, we have enrolled fifteen new students for second semester for a grand total of 185 students! Thank you to our families who are spreading the word about the advantages of independent study in Oak Park!

High School students are enjoying the biology, chemistry and physics labs offered by Oak View High School science instructor, Nicole Simmons.



OPIS high schoolers ham it up on movie night. They enjoyed viewing "Mean Girls" as much as they enjoyed each other's company.



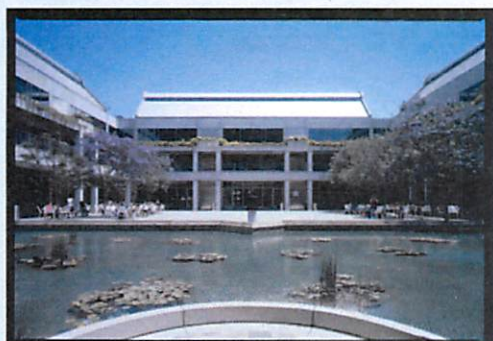
Upcoming Field Trips

Here is a preview of our remaining field trips. If you are interested in attending, please send an email to bharrison@oakparkusd.org.

Transportation is available to the Skirball Center and Limoneira Ranch.



Huck Finn, T.O. Civic Arts Plaza, February 28



Skirball Museum of Tolerance, March 7

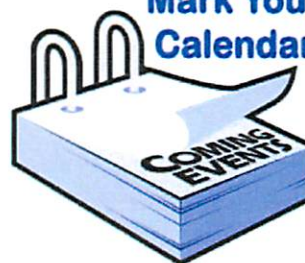


Stagecoach Inn Museum, T.O., April 18



Limoneira Ranch, Santa Paula, May 17

Mark Your Calendar



February 28	Huck Finn
March 4	Make your reservation for the Skirball Museum trip on March 7
March 5	Writing Exam grades 4 & 7
March 7	Skirball Museum
March 17-20	WASC Visit
March 28	11 th grade writing exam
March 29-April 7	Spring Break
April 18	Stagecoach Inn
April 29	No School
May 2	Open House
May 3	International Gala
May 2	New Family Meeting
May 9 – 22	STAR Testing
May 14, 15	CAHSEE
May 17	Limoneira Ranch
May 27	Memorial Day Holiday
June 6	8 th Grade Culmination
June 10	Zuma Beach Party
June 13	Graduation
June 14	Last Day of School

Congratulations

to the dozens of OPIS students who earned their place on the **Honor Roll** for achieving a 3.75 or above grade point average!