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The Independent

Oak Park Independent School

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Barbara Harrison, Editor

Principal Lou Tabone Announces His Retirement

After seven years of dedicated service as principal of both Oak Park Independent School and Oak View High School, Mr. Tabone has announced his retirement, effective at the end of the school year. In 2012, Mr. Tabone was recognized with the **Alternative Education/ Continuation High School Principal of the Year Award**. Additionally, both of his schools earned the highest honor within the district – the Constellation Award. His schools also achieved outstanding WASC accreditations under his leadership.

During Mr. Tabone's tenure, not only did STAR test scores improve, but OPIS grew considerably. Lou hired additional teachers and office staff to meet the needs of his expanding school. He was instrumental in acquiring the adequate resources needed to serve the expanding student population and in implementing high school science labs. As Director of Alternative Education in the district, Mr. Tabone oversaw the Healthy Kids Task Force and was in charge of expulsions.

All of us at OPIS wish Lou a relaxing and rewarding retirement.

WASC Visit a Huge Success



Primary students Madison Gamboa, Kiara Gamboa, Bella Medrano and Calista Loter gave a musical performance to entertain the visiting WASC committee in March. See WASC results on page 6.



OPIS Stars Shine Brightly at the District's International Gala

Teachers Kate Edwards and Kate Thompson pictured at left, were instrumental in the success of the 4th annual International Gala. See story on page 3.



Star Scholar Award



Senior **Weston Shuken** was honored at the 30th Annual Star Scholar Awards Ceremony on Tuesday, April 17, 2013 for being the top senior at OPIS. His teacher Carolyn Purkey, who attended the ceremony with Principal Lou Tabone, nominated him. Weston attended the ceremony with his mom, Pam Shuken. World War II veteran, Olympian, and author, Louis Zamperini, delivered the inspiring keynote speech.



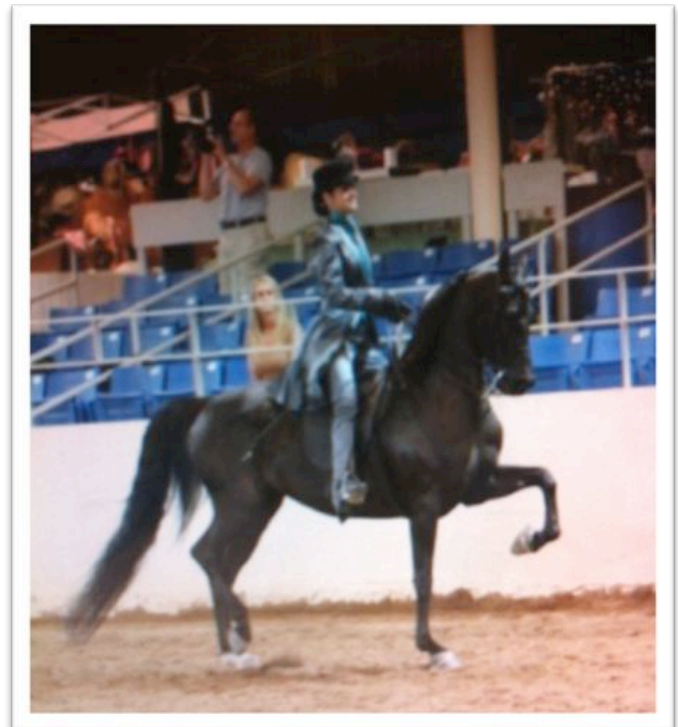
Weston has earned a 4.0 GPA in his two semesters at OPIS and maintains a 3.0 overall GPA in his secondary education. He excels in music, art, songwriting, English, economics and government. His hobbies include surfing, off road motorcycling, and automobiles. He is an active member of his church and has held down a part-time job while working on his academics. His goal is to become a musician. He aspires to attend Belmont University in the fall to concentrate on a music major. Weston will participate in the graduation ceremony on Thursday, June 13, 2013. Congratulations, Weston!

Top: Lou Tabone, Weston Shuken, and Carolyn Purkey

Bottom: Photo of Louis Zamperini by Joseph A. Garcia, Ventura County Star

Nicole Krueger, Equestrian

From April 22nd to the 28th, **Nicole Krueger** competed at the Region 7 Arabian and Half Arabian Horse Show in Scottsdale, Arizona. Nicole rides at Lowe Show Horse Centre and her trainer is Jim Lowe. Jim won the Trainer of the Year Award at the Arabian Horse Times this past year. Nicole and her horse, Penelope Krewse, are becoming better known in the industry as each show passes. Penelope Krewse, or Penny, is a black, half Arabian- half saddle bred mare. Together, they finished the Region 7 show with one Unanimous Champion and three Reserve Champions. With Region 7 being such an important show with a lot of competition, this is quite an honor. Nicole and Penelope Krewse will be showing at Youth Nationals this summer!



Pictured at right : Nicole and Penny



Left to right: Olivia Holt and Bella Medrano, Vanessa and Veronica Merrell, Alexa Kernan, Gabrielle Reublin, and Adam Irigoyen.

International Gala - District-wide event showcased several OPIS students

The Oak Park High School Pavilion was the place to be on Friday, May 3. Thanks to the hard work of the OPIS student body, a standing-room-only crowd was on hand to witness the district's biggest and best International Gala. Our students worked tirelessly to advertise this district-wide event. They met with OPUSD board member, Sepideh Yeoh, made announcements at the elementary schools, created a star-studded promotional video, made international food, helped with donations and set up a Facebook page.

Displaying a wide range of talent, district students performed dances, instrumental music, martial arts, and songs from around the world. These acts were followed by an international fashion show. Thousands of dollars of merchandise and services were auctioned off and a smorgasbord of international foods was available for sampling after the show.

The International Gala showcased many OPIS students including **Olivia Holt** and **Omid Afshar Tavara** as emcees, **Vanessa** and **Veronica Merrell** singing the national anthem, **Gabrielle Reublin** and **Alexa Kernan** performing Russian ballet, **Bella Medrano** playing piano and modeling Egyptian clothing, the **Ochoa Boyz** - Ryan, Raymond, **Bobby** (OPIS student) and Rick, singing and dancing and generally bringing the house down, and **Adam Irigoyen** performing a rousing rendition of *School Girl*.

Special thanks go to videographers **Cameron Boyce** and **Karan Brar** and OPIS teachers Kate Edwards and Kate Thompson and the many other students who helped make this such an exciting and successful event.





OPIS crew hamming it up at the International Gala:

Olivia Holt, Cameron Boyce, Joey Maroney, Karan Brar, Zachary Gordon, Adam Irigoyen, Omid Afshar Tavana, Vanessa Merrell, Veronica Merrell, Hannah Defore, Ryan Ochoa, Raymond Ochoa, Rick Ochoa and Robert Ochoa

Alex Kukoff - Published Author



Many authors face years of rejections before they are first published. Not so with OPIS's Alex Kukoff. Her short story, "Glass," won Seventeen Magazine's 2011 Fiction Contest through *Scholastic*. Her story was [published](#) in the magazine along with an [interview](#). Not only that, Alex received \$5000.00 and a phone call with Maggie Stiefvater, author of the successful *Shiver* trilogy.

More recently an excerpt of Alex's memoir, entitled "Glittering Pixie Dust," has been featured in a new ebook anthology through the New York Times Learning Network, Edutopia, and the National Writing Project.

Alex recently partnered with an engineering firm, [GrabCad](#), to produce a product for the disabled, particularly the hard-of-hearing, that can be used in, but is not limited to, movie theaters. This project will go public with the announcement later this month.

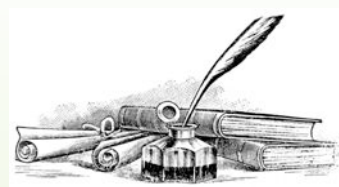
For over a year, Alex blogged for the Jewish website, [babaganewz.com](#), about real teens contributing to the community in honor of their Bar and Bat Mitzvahs. [Babaganewz.com](#) is through Behrman House, a publishing house that specializes in educational material for Jewish religious schools. Additionally, Alex was on the 2012 Editorial Board of [Yaldah Magazine](#), a Jewish magazine written by Jewish girls for Jewish girls.

Alex will be cross-blogging for the Jewish Teen Funders Network Blog, the Jewish Communal Fund's [blog](#), and the Huffington Post in the next few months.

Last year, Alex presented at Oak Park High School's sustainability showcase, and subsequently received a letter from former Congressman Tony Strickland praising her efforts to be green.

Although Alex is a 9th grader at OPIS, she is concurrently enrolled at Moorpark College where she is working with the Honors club to secure education rights and help women in Afghanistan.

Congratulations, Alex, for all of your amazing accomplishments!



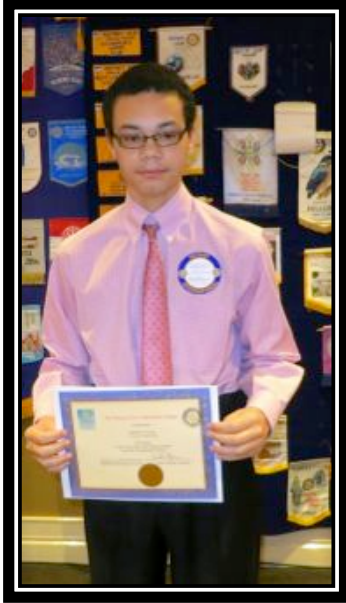
Sophomore writer, Alex Kukoff





Rotary Essay Contest

OPIS Students Take Top Honors



Demetrius Young 1st place winner

Every year the Rotary Club sponsors an essay writing competition for elementary, middle school and high school students. In March several OPIS students submitted their essays on the topic of The Rotary Four-Way Test. Students answered four questions:

- Is it the TRUTH?
- Is it FAIR to all concerned?
- Will it build GOOD WILL and FRIENDSHIPS
- Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

These questions are designed to help people make appropriate decisions. Judging from the results, our students excelled!



Elisabeth Epperson 2nd place winner

Demetrius Young and **Elisabeth Epperson**, both students of Kate Edwards, were named the first and second place winners respectively out of a field of 75 essays from seven surrounding high schools! **Jodie Bell Cortez**, student of Carolyn Purkey and **Briana Shneyder**, student of Kate Edwards received Honorable Mention.

In the middle school category, **Elise Luthman**, student of Danny O'Brien, earned 2nd place among 27 entrants from eight middle schools.

Bianca Hofstatter, student of Barbara Harrison, received Honorable Mention in the elementary school division out of 47 essays submitted from 12 elementary schools. For the record, **Zoe Thompson**, first grade daughter of OPIS teacher, Kate Thompson, won 2nd place from Red Oak Elementary.

As you can see, OPIS was well represented among the winning students, taking home six out of the 18 awards given from a field of 27 total schools. Well done OPIS!!!



6th grader Keely Savitt created a multi-media presentation to explore what substances cause teeth to yellow.

Open House – A Celebration of OPIS Students

If you are curious about what makes teeth yellow, what happens when you cut a worm in half or thirds, how theater lighting works, which tastes better – cookies made from room temperature vs. refrigerated dough, how to propel bullets farther, and other random questions, you should have come to the OPIS Open House on May 2 for some answers. Part Science Fair and Author's Fair, Open House gives our students the opportunity to display some of their best work of the year. This was a great evening for students, and for current and prospective families to get a taste of the unique individuals that make up the OPIS student body. Congratulations to all who participated.



Principal's Message

Greeting OPIS families,

In March, we participated in a full review of all aspects of our program and school. A WASC visiting team of educators joined us for three days. The team spoke with students, met with parents and teachers, and visited the classrooms to observe teaching and learning first hand. The visiting team determined several *School Wide Strengths*:

- The Oak Park School District Board of Education and District Administration had a vision to create within its own resources and under its close supervision Oak Park Independent School with its unique mission serving the students with their individual needs.
- OPIS Principal's experience, profound knowledge of and commitment to alternative education, dedication to the achievement of OPIS academic standards, and support of individual needs of the students are respected and appreciated by the entire OPIS community.
- The teachers take a sincere interest in well-being and academic achievements of their students and are available to them outside of the school day by phone and email.
- Exceptionally dedicated teachers assume the role of counselor, mentor, and coach and guide their students.
- OPIS customizes and personalizes learning
- The teachers use a variety of modalities and strategies that address the individual needs for each student
- The mutual respect and trust between teachers and students is a result of excellent communication within the entire school community.

Because our school is experiencing



Several students gave impassioned and articulate testimonials about their OPIS experiences at the WASC reception in March.

significant enrollment growth, the visiting team made several key recommendations. The team recommended that our school counselor could schedule regular hours to be on site each week. Also, the committee recognized our need for additional space, in the form of adding a classroom. The team recommended the need for additional clerical support. Finally, the committee encouraged us to seek a math and science teacher to enhance our program.

Our vision and goal remains the same: To provide a quality, personalized educational experience. Through partnerships with home and community, our students develop the skills, knowledge, insight and character required to make the successful transition from school to career and to a rewarding life.

I remain honored and grateful for the opportunity to work with outstanding students, families and staff. We have had another stellar year at Independent School- fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and certified by the NCAA. I am so proud of the student accomplishments again this year. I am so fortunate to work with such dedicated and caring teachers and staff. Additionally, thank you to our parents and guardians for their support at home. I am going to miss all of you so very much.

Lou Tabone, Principal





Stagecoach Inn Museum



*Top: Our group learned Chumash songs and games
Below: Calista practices the Chumash stick game as Bianca, Kiara, Eden, and Evan look on*

Our April field trip destination was the Stagecoach Inn Museum in Newbury Park where our families spent the morning learning about the Chumash Indians. In the museum we saw artifacts of these early people who once lived along the coast of California over a span of 7,000 square miles, extending from Malibu to Paso Robles. On display were Chumash clothing, tools, jewelry, baskets, games, arrowheads, and cooking utensils. On a short but beautiful hike, we entered a small replica of a Chumash dome-shaped home made of willow branches. Our morning ended with Chumash songs, games, and dances on the lawn in front of the original Grand Union Hotel, built in 1876.



Limoniera Ranch



Outfitted in the latest hairnet styles, our group prepares for a tour of the Limoniera lemon packing plant.

In May, OPIS families learned about the agricultural heritage of Ventura County as we toured Limoniera Ranch in beautiful Santa Paula. This lemon ranch was established in 1893 and today is one of the largest lemon growing businesses in North America. Limoniera has been innovative in the field, developing disease-resistant and high yield lemon and avocado trees. We toured the orchards and observed the five-acre solar energy field which produces enough power to run the packing plant for one year. Although we didn't see them, sheep roam the solar panels providing weed abatement.

In the packing plant we saw how lemons enter the building and are washed, waxed and sorted. The aroma was wonderful! Our guide, Albert, showed us where the lemons are stored and packaged. Some of the lemons are specially packaged for Trader Joe's and Costco, among others, but the best quality lemons are exported all over the world – to Japan (which gets the biggest and best lemons), the Philippines, Korea, Russia and other worldwide markets.

The culmination of our trip was a visit to the demonstration orchard where we picked fruit to take home. A relaxing picnic lunch on the beautiful grounds marked the end of a wonderful and educational day.

Meet Rower, Morgan Klintare



You could say that Morgan Klintare has taken to rowing as a duck to water. In the span of just a year, this OPIS freshman from Thousand Oaks has gone from a recreational rower to being one of 29 girls chosen to participate at the 2013 US Rowing Junior Women's National Team High Performance Camp in New London, Connecticut this summer. There Morgan will compete for a seat to race at the CanAmMex Regatta in Oklahoma City or the US Rowing Club National Championships in Camden, New Jersey.

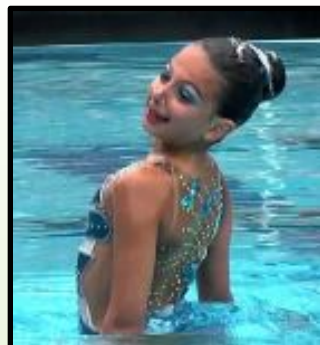
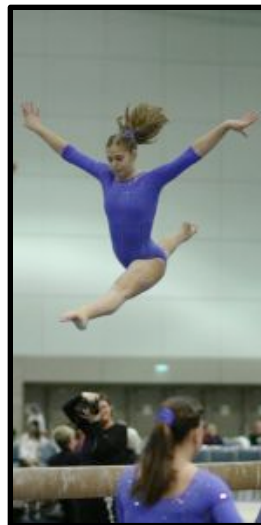
What has propelled Morgan to these heights? Lots and lots of hard work! Morgan trains at Lake Casitas in Ojai with the Lake Casitas Rowing Association five days a week with her team and coach, Wendy Gillett. Her training program consists of erging (working out on an indoor rowing machine), running, stretching and practicing in the water. In February, Morgan entered the Erg Sprints competition and placed first in her age group! She also performed well at an ID camp where coaches looked at the rowers for national selection.

In addition to her love of rowing, Morgan loves OPIS. She says it is a place where she feels welcome and has met many encouraging friends.

We wish Morgan well as she pursues her goal of rowing in college, possibly in Boston or Seattle.

At the Top of Their Games

OPIS students are amazingly talented and hard-working! Take a look at some of our super stars doing what they do best! Top: Ballerina Alexis Kernan. Middle: Gymnast Jesslyn Fernandez and Surfer Sebastian Mendes. Bottom: Gymnast Taylor Pearson shown with former Olympian Mary Lou Retton, Synchronized Swimmer Bianca Hofstatter competing for a place on the national team and Actress Ashley Thomas currently playing Young Cosette in *Les Miserables* at the High Street Theater.



Introducing Ashley Kernan, Circus Performer

I perform with Le Petit Cirque, the only kids' professional cirque troop in North America. Le petit Cirque is a humanitarian cirque that helps numerous causes. For example, in September I performed a show at the Avalon Theatre in Hollywood, Ca. The show was for PAWS (Performing Animal Welfare Society). Last December I traveled with Le Petit Cirque to Denver, Colorado to perform with the Silhouettes in their Christmas Spectacular Show.

I perform on the trapeze, chandelier, canes, and I do acrobatics. I train with Le Petit Cirque every Saturday for 4 hours, sometimes more. I also go to gym five days a week.

Wish Wear designed my costume just for me. The concept behind the costume was to illustrate Cinderella on the trapeze. My costume is pink and white stripes. I wear a pink wig. Performers in Cirque always wear wigs and make-up at every event. My make-up includes white face, rosy cheeks, red and yellow eye shadow, black eye liner, black eyebrows and black air-brushed dots on my forehead. The make-up can take up to an hour to put on and it's not easy to take the make-up off. It's very hot!

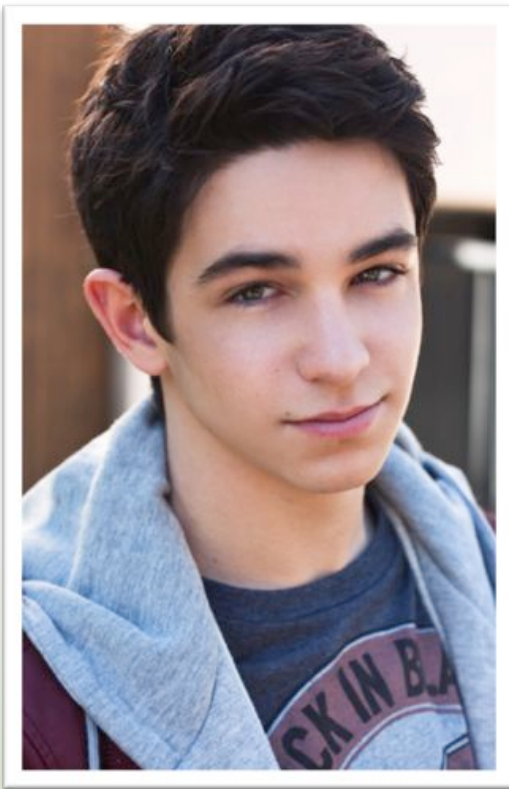
It takes hard work and lots of practice to get it right. Especially because when I am up in the air, there is nothing under me, no net to catch me if I fall, so I just don't fall. But it takes a lot of practice to get all the skills correct. I love performing and being part of Le Petit Cirque.



7th grader, Ashley Kernan



A Year to Remember for Actor Zachary Gordon!



2013 has been a remarkable year for OPIS freshman, **Zachary Gordon**. His acting triumphs have been recognized by some of the highest awards in the industry. For example, Zachary was nominated in the category of FAVORITE MOVIE ACTOR along with Johnny Depp, Will Smith and Andrew Garfield in the **Nickelodeon Kids Choice Awards**. It was a huge honor to be in the company of such talent in this award show! Zach was also nominated and WON the FAVORITE MALE MOVIE ACTOR for the second consecutive year in the Kids Pick Flicks. For the Young Artist Award he was nominated the Best Young Male Actor in a Feature Film, *Diary of A Wimpy Kid Dog Days*, and won Best Ensemble in a Feature Film for the same movie.

2013 film credits for Zachary include his role as Willy in the *Incredible Burt Wonderstone* and four comedic videos that can be seen on Youtube which he made to promote James Patterson's new book series, *I Funny*.

Look for Zachary as he plays Henry, the oldest sibling in *The Boxcar Children* and Pete in *Pete's Christmas*, which will both be released this year. Kudos to Zachary for all of his accomplishments!

Zendaya Puts the “Awe” in Awesome

Several OPIS students and staff members have been glued to the television every Monday and Tuesday night for the past several weeks as one of our own competed for the coveted Mirror Ball Award on season 16 of *Dancing With the Stars*. At 16 years old, **Zendaya Coleman** was the youngest contestant ever to appear on the popular show in which celebrities are paired with professional dancers to perform intricate and entertaining dance routines every week in front of a live studio audience.

Zendaya set the bar high for the entire season with her first performance of the show, a contemporary number beautifully danced with her partner, Val Chmerkovskiy. She immediately established herself as the one to beat!

Throughout the season **Zendaya** thrilled the TV audience with her talent and versatility as she danced the tango, hip hop, salsa, two-step, fox trot, jive, samba and waltz. She and her partner were the first couple to score a perfect 10 on their dance and were also the first pair to earn a perfect 30 points for a dance. They received the top score of all of the couples at the season’s end on May 21.

As judge Len Goodman said, “The one word that sums up great dancing is ‘**Zendaya**’.” “You’ve only just scratched the surface of your talent,” he added.

Throughout the grueling rehearsal schedule, it should be noted that **Zendaya** continued to do her schoolwork for OPIS and even completed an intense battery of STAR tests while on the show! Not only that, she earned the top judges’ scores entering the final competition while performing with strep throat and a partner who required 14 stitches on his head after a rehearsal accident just minutes before airing the final competition!

Zendaya proved that she is a consummate professional, an awesome talent, and a fantastic role model to her millions of followers who know her as Rocky Blue on the popular Disney show, *Shake It Up*.

Congratulations to **Zendaya**, not only for her success on *Dancing With the Stars*, but for being an honor student at OPIS and for being one of the exemplary students that make up the incomparable OPIS Crew! For a real treat watch [Zendaya's Dances](#).

OPIS Class of 2013 is Making Plans

Congratulations to the class of 2013. Here is a list of what some of our seniors will be doing after graduation.

Jake DeRose – Moorpark College, screenwriting
 Kyle Espinoza – Moorpark College, football
 Elizabeth Freeman – BYU, Salt Lake City
 Bryan Grigorian – Pursuing a hockey career
 Tristan Henrichs – Pursuing a hockey career
 Morgan McIntyre – Moorpark, acting
 Margo Olsen – Ventura College
 Alex Reints – CSUN, playing hockey
 Dani Messina – Moorpark College
 Erik Makitalo - Moorpark College
 Weston Shuken –Belmont University, songwriting
 Riley McCarthy - University of Arizona
 Bronwyn Callero - Oregon State University
 Nick Ericksen - Sacramento State University
 Sean Burch- taking a year off
 Megan Polikretis - Cuesta College
 Matthew Hanna- undecided
 Galya Davis- Moorpark College
 Luca Bruno –Uni. of Arizona, Football scholarship
 Daryl Feinberg - Moorpark
 Rebecca Sephton - Moorpark
 Joseph Steiner – Moorpark
 Lyrica Blankfein—Continuing to study with the School of American Ballet
 Nicole Walters—interested in nursing
 Casey Denning—undecided
 Lily Kobabe—Studying ballet in San Francisco
 Nick Romero—undecided
 Nicholas Hughes—Moorpark or Valley College
 Emily Russell—Vanguard University
 Trevor Mangram—Moorpark College



From left to right: Peyton List, Karan Brar, teacher Gillian Gamboa, Cameron Boyce, and Skai Jackson. These OPIS students all appear on the Disney sit com, *Jessie*, about a nanny in New York who cares for adopted kids of different ethnicities.



School-Wide Beach Party

What a way to usher in the summer! The annual OPIS beach party will take place on Monday, June 10 at Zuma Beach lifeguard station #12. Plan on arriving at 11:00 and stay as long as you like! This long-anticipated event brings together OPIS students of all ages (and parents too) in celebration of the completion of another year of school. We also recognize and honor our 5th graders who will be promoted to middle school in the fall. Last year was a blast – ask anyone who was there! Join in the fun and plan on coming this year!



Mark Your Calendars

- June 3 – Deadline for submitting external credits
- June 6 – 8th grade culmination, Deerhill Park
- June 6 – New Family Orientation, Red Oak
- June 10 – OPIS Zuma Beach Party
- June 10 – 5th grade culmination at Zuma
- June 11 – Graduation Rehearsal 8:30 AM
- June 12 – Graduation Rehearsal 8:30 AM
- June 12 – Senior Breakfast
- June 13 – Graduation Rehearsal 8:30 AM
- June 13 – Graduation Ceremony 6:00
- June 13 – Grad Night
- June 14 – Last day of school
- June 14 – Diploma pick up OVHS 9:00 – 1:00
- June 18 – Grades available online
- Aug. 28 – 1st day of school for 2013-2014 year

Bronwyn Callero Nominated for Reagan Presidential Scholarship



Teacher Kate Edwards and her student Bronwyn Callero in front of Air Force I at the Reagan Library Awards Banquet

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation has just completed its 14th year of the Reagan Presidential Foundation Scholars Program which rewards seniors graduating from Ventura County high schools who have demonstrated leadership, character, communication skills and academic achievement in high school. **Bronwyn Callero**, of Oak Park Independent School, was one of the top 12 finalists out of 240 applicants for the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation Scholars Program. Of all the amazing applicants, 100 were invited to a dinner at the Ronald Reagan Library on May 15th where the top 12 were chosen to receive scholarship money. A total of \$50,000 in college scholarships was distributed to students for tuition, books, and room and board. Bronwyn is an outstanding student and has shown much dedication in her academics, community service, and leadership abilities. She will attend Oregon State University this fall and we wish her the best of luck!

If you know of any families that may be interested in attending OPIS in the fall, please invite them to our New Family Orientation on Thursday, June 6 from 6:00 – 7:30 in the Red Oak multi-purpose room.