

the

Independent

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Barbara Harrison, Editor

Oakchella Plays to a Sold-Out Crowd! OPIS's First Concert Rocks the Pavilion



A huge and enthusiastic audience raised the roof of the pavilion at Oak Park High School on Saturday, May 31. The OPIS Student Body, under the direction of Kate Thompson and Kate Edwards, sponsored this popular event that featured a number of talented OPIS student performers. **Nadji Jeter**, actor and entertainer, and **Curran Walters**, model, were the hosts of the evening.

From hip hop to jazz, country to contemporary the audience was wowed with an evening of music and dance. Additionally a silent auction offered gift baskets filled with TV and sports memorabilia, gift cards from several venues, and a variety of gift items. *A huge thank you to everyone who helped make this the event of the year!* Pictured below are XMOB, The McClain sisters, Ochoa Boyz and The Merrell Twins.





Message from the Principal, Mr. McGugan



Danny "O'Bri" The Science Guy

Teacher Appreciation Day- Thank you to all the families of Oak Park Independent School. We have one of the best, most wonderful staffs and we thank them for all the time that they put into our school for the benefit of our students. I also want to thank the parents for taking the time to put on the great luncheon and presenting amazing gifts for all of our teachers.

Congratulations Seniors - Congratulations to all of our seniors who are graduating this year. We are extremely lucky to be able to walk with our sister school, Oak Park High School, in the beautiful sports stadium. There is a long-standing tradition, where students walk down the walkway and then stand on either side of the walkway while all of their teachers walk between them. The teachers walk through and congratulate the students for their successes and say their final good-byes. This is a special moment to see. Once the students are seated, they are announced one-by-one with a baby picture and their senior photo on a Jumbotron. All of this overlooks the mountains behind the stadium. It is a glorious night and I hope all of you can attend at some point. The seniors have all worked very hard and I wish them all the luck in their future endeavors. Congratulations to the class of 2014!!

OPIS Moving - Lastly, I want to mention to all of families that we are all very excited about our new move to the District Office site for OPIS. This is going to give us so much more space, rooms, and much needed time for administration and staff members to be together. Though the year is ending we are looking to our new beginning at our new site. Have a great summer and see you all in August.

Thanks,
Mr. McGugan

Kudos to teacher, **Danny O'Brien**, who was one of six judges for the Earth Science Category of the Junior and Senior Division of the 2014 Los Angeles County Science Fair! The judging was an all day event on March 28 at the Pasadena Convention Center.

The goal of the Science Fair is to provide "a yearly setting for middle and high school students to show off their investigative skills and creativity, to compete for medals, special awards and scholarships. Students not only receive recognition for their projects but the Science Fair nurtures student interest in various scientific and engineering fields."

According to Danny, "This was a fantastic experience! It is exciting to work with young people from all over Los Angeles County and see their enthusiasm for science and scientific investigation of our world. I was glad to be part of it."



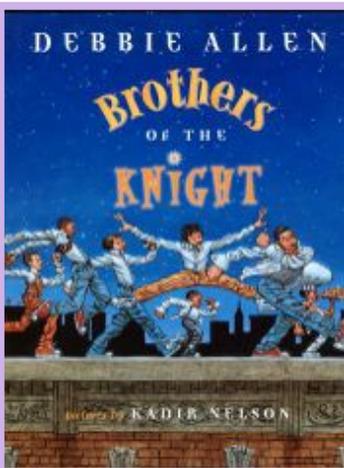
More About The Science Guy

We congratulate **Danny O'Brien** on being selected to participate in the **JPL-NASA Summer Institute for Science Teachers**. This six-day institute, which will be held in July at the Jet Propulsion Lab in Pasadena, is designed to help middle school science teachers incorporate NASA's cutting-edge research into STEM*-integrated lesson plans for students. In addition, there will be robotics workshops led by JPL and CSUN education leaders. Teachers will work with peers to learn how to program Lego MindStorms Robots. The overall focus of the institute will be to help science teachers prepare appropriate lessons in problem-based learning in *science, technology, engineering-enrichment, and mathematics activities (STEM).

Danny is excited to be part of this program and looks forward to the opportunity to share his newly acquired skills and knowledge with students at OPIS.

Alex Shulman

Hip Hop Dancer to go on National Tour



Alexander Shulman has been cast in the National Tour of "Brothers of the Knight" as one of the principal Brothers. "Brothers of the Knight," is a musical by award winning producer, actress, director and choreographer Debbie Allen and Grammy winning and Oscar-nominated songwriter James Ingram, and it is based on the Brothers Grimm fairy tale, "The Twelve Dancing Princesses." In this adaptation, the story tells about the young Knight brothers who leave torn-up sneakers by their beds every morning. Their father is a strict preacher who has forbidden them to dance. But despite his order, the boys sneak out every night to dance. Alexander has begun rehearsals and the show will open in Los Angeles June 19th. After a four-day, six-show stay in Los Angeles, the tour will travel to Boston, MA, Philadelphia, PA, Washington DC, and Charlotte, NC. Alex is so excited for this opportunity and can't wait to spend much of summer doing what he loves to do - dancing and performing!

Alexandra Kukoff- Phi Theta Kappa



By Iliana Kukoff

Congratulations to **Alexandra Kukoff** who was recently inducted into Phi Theta Kappa, Moorpark College's Honor Society. Alexandra is currently enrolled in a dual curriculum - OPIS and as a full time student at Moorpark Community College. Additionally, Alexandra was accepted into ANNPowervital Voices Initiative and was one of 50 high school students to be chosen for this exclusive fellowship. Lastly, Alexandra recently was awarded Honorable Mention for her poetry for the Scholastic Arts and Writing Competition. This is the second consecutive year that Alexandra was given that distinction.

None of this would be possible without Ms. Purkey's guidance and support and the wonderful environment OPIS awards all its students.

Field Trip News



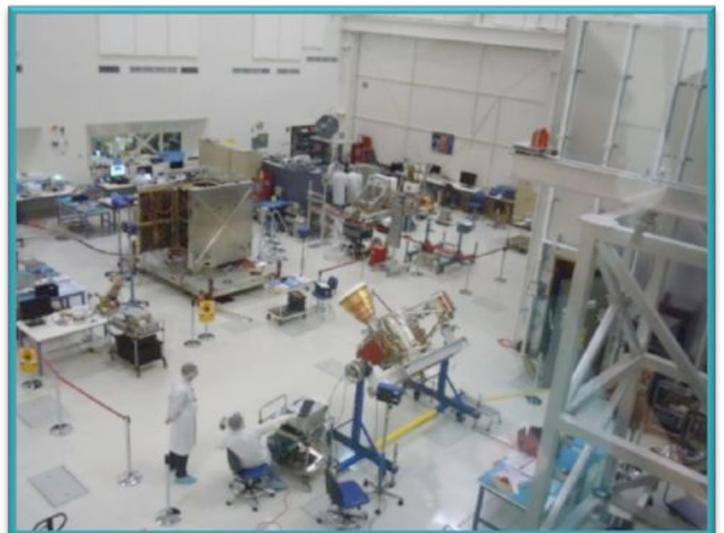
Jet Propulsion Laboratory

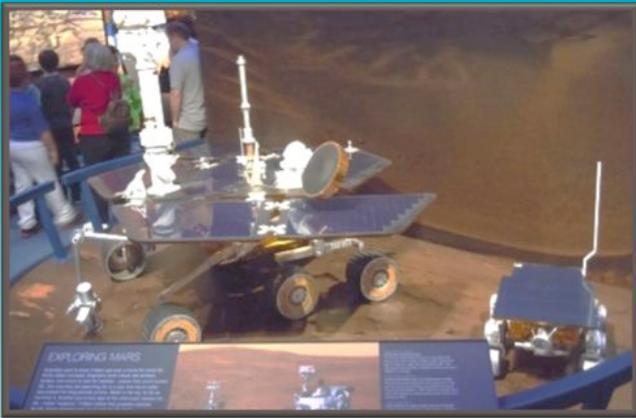
OPIS faculty, parents, and elementary, middle and high school students enjoyed an afternoon at the Jet Propulsion Lab in La Canada Flintridge on March 12. Our enthusiastic and knowledgeable tour guides showed us an orientation movie in a large auditorium surrounded with replicas of past and present spacecraft. We learned that the job of JPL, a branch of NASA, is to explore our planet, the solar system and the universe by sending robots into space. We were in awe of the incomprehensible distances these robots travel and the unexpectedly long life expectancy they have exhibited. Two rovers have been sent to Mars, both with a warranty of 90 days. One continues to function more than a decade later! After viewing the film, we explored a museum of sorts with many hands-on exhibits where we learned about various robots and their functions in space. We also visited the climate-controlled laboratory where unmanned space crafts are made. Our guides ended the trip in the control room where many scientists gather to view the landings of their robots. Our students asked intelligent questions and showed a very thorough knowledge of space. The day was out-of-this-world!



Left - a replica of the Mars rover

Below – From an observation deck we observe scientists in a NASA clean room. The sanitized environment prevents contaminants from entering space!





A big focus of our visit to JPL was to learn about the various Mars exploration missions. The larger vehicle on the left is a model of Spirit and Opportunity. They were sent to Mars in 2003.

The finale of the trip was a visit to the Control Room. This is where NASA scientists control and communicate with probes, rovers and satellites wherever they are in space. Students learned how communication is handled in order to compensate for the rotation of the Earth by a series of various radio antennae in different time zones around the world.



One fun exhibit showed students one way that scientists expand our senses by using infrared detectors to view things in space which are not visible to our naked eyes. Is that a space alien? Looks a lot like teacher, Danny O'Brien!



Metrolink to Union Station and Olvera Street



“All Aboard!” Union Station is celebrating its 75th birthday and our families were on hand to learn about the history of this last great railroad station to be built in America. The design of Union Station is a blend of Spanish Colonial Revival Architecture and the Art Deco style. The arches, bell towers, gardens and church-like interiors still provide an impressive welcome to Los Angeles travelers. In the photo above, our tour guide from the Los Angeles Conservancy, is showing our group how 75 years of pedestrian traffic has worn the colorful geometric designs on the marble floors.

Following the train station tour, we walked to Olvera Street for shopping and an authentic Mexican lunch. Tired, but happy, we returned to the Metrolink station in Moorpark, savoring this most comfortable form of transportation. Parents and children alike loved their ride on the Metrolink!

THE GETTY VILLA

7000 YEARS OF ANCIENT ART



With clipboards and pencils in hand, OPIS students entered the beautiful Getty Villa in Malibu to explore ancient artifacts from the end of the Stone Age to the fall of the Roman Empire.

We visited several galleries in which students could select one piece of art to study in depth. They had to provide information about the piece such as its title, description, where it was found, when it was made, its function, purpose and importance.

Among the galleries we visited were Gods and Goddesses, Coins and Jewels, Women and Children, Luxury Vessels, Temple of Herakles, and Mythical Heroes.

Our groups walked in the beautiful gardens enjoying the reflecting ponds, fountains, arbors, and bronze statues surrounding the villa. Over 300 species of plants complement the structure, including a wide variety of herbs. One of our parents, Tobi Royer, provided her group with a lot of information about the plants, drawing on a recent tour she had at the site.

The Getty Villa is modeled after an ancient Roman country house, the Villa dei Papiri in Herculaneum, Italy. This villa was buried in the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in AD 79. Since much of it remains buried to this day, architects in the early 1970's based many of the museum's architectural and landscaping details on elements from other ancient Roman houses.

Smarter Balanced Test Roll Out

Kudos to teacher, **Ty DeLong**, and all the students who participated in the May Smarter Balanced Field Tests. This was the first time our students had the opportunity to take these newly developed, computer-based tests. Though their results will remain unknown to students and the school, the purpose was to refine the questions and make students more comfortable with the new testing format. The tests are designed to assess the new Common Core Standards in Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics.



Karan Brar and Kennedy Waite enjoy some laughs as they participate in PE testing with teacher, Carolyn Purkey.



Haley Gilchrist Tap Star

Haley Gilchrist recently won top 1st place for her age division and 3rd overall for her tap solo at Kar national dance competition. You may recognize her from Oakchella! She just completed filming a movie on a yacht with Clint Eastwood where she appeared in a wedding party!

Student Achievement

As you know, achievement is measured in many ways. Read on to see how our students shine in so many different areas.



John Monday

John Monday is an OPIS freshman with many accomplishments. He is an accomplished pianist, passing Level 10 Advanced in Certificate of Merit for Piano with honors and performing at the Honors Recital this spring. He is a winner of the Bronze Medal Congressional Award and will be presented this honor by a legislator very soon. For eight years John has been a volunteer violinist and pianist at Senior Concerns in Thousand Oaks. This summer John is heading to China as part of a **People to People** delegation. We congratulate John on his many successes and wish him continued success in the future!



Angel, John Monday and Serena

Sebastian Mendes

Affectionately known as “**Bash**,” this OPIS 6th grader is making a big splash in the world of surfing. One day he hopes to be one of the first Olympians to medal in surfing.

At nine years old Sebastian was the youngest person ever to qualify for Surfing America Prime U14 . He won the West Coast title and Championship at the ages of nine and ten. Bash surfed the Bonzai Pipeline on the North shore of Oahu when he was only nine! That same year Red Bull sponsored him at a five-day training camp for elite 12-year-old American surfers. He recently won the U14 WSA Championship title and is featured prominently in this month’s issue of Surfing magazine in an ad for Freestyle watches.

Last year Bash surfed in Nicaragua and was written up in the local paper. He currently trains with the USA Surf Team Coach. He is on Team O’Neill and is the youngest amateur pro.

Sebastian surfs with dolphins, grabs the tails of leopard sharks, and plays with baby seals. The oldest local surfers love him for his maturity in surfing and inherent respect of everyone and everything in the water. He is a pure surfer and understands what surfing is in its natural form. He is not aggressive, but is absolutely committed when it is his turn.

Surfing is not without its risks. Once a great white brushed up against Bash. In January Sebastian was surfing in the biggest surf to hit Hawaii since 1960. Unfortunately, he got sucked out in 40-50 foot surf. Fortunately, big wave riders rescued him. In spite of the risks, Sebastian remains passionate about surfing. There are lots of videos on the Internet where you can see this great talent for yourself. You will be amazed!



Terrell Ransom, Jr.



Congratulations to 6th grader, Terrell Ransom! Terrell is the voice of Darwin Watterson in "The Amazing World of Gumball" on the Cartoon Network. Here he is shown on the green carpet at Cartoon Network's Hall of Game Awards.

Terrell is the voice of this character, Darwin Watterson.



Terrell is also known for his portrayal of "Theo," an autistic boy, in "Days of Our Lives" which he has done for the past six years. As a result of this experience, Terrell has become a strong supporter of autistic awareness. He has also been featured in "Courage" and "Murder on the 13th Floor." You may have seen Terrell in one of the many TV commercials and print ads he has done. A special thanks to Terrell for his impromptu interview that was video taped and shown to prospective OPIS students and their parents at our May 15 Orientation meeting.



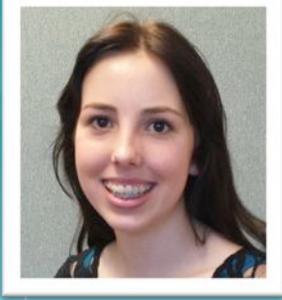
*Terrell's groundbreaking role on **Days of Our Lives** began when he was just four years old. One of the show's writers is interested in raising autism awareness because she has a son with autism, so she has made his part an integral part of the show. Here, a very young Terrell is shown with his show business mom and dad.*

Congratulations, Carolyn!



On April 29th teacher Carolyn Purkey became a grandmother for the first time when her daughter, Nicole, gave birth to Emma Drew. Emma made her appearance weighing in at 7 pounds 11 ounces. In addition to being welcomed by several family members, Emma's birth was announced on Good Morning America! Congratulations, Carolyn, from the entire OPIS family!





Rachel Kandel

OPIS 10th Grader
Accepted to CSU
Channel Islands

Hi! My name is **Rachel Kandel**. I am a tenth grader at OPIS. I have attended OPIS since seventh grade, and I will be going to CSU Channel Islands in the fall. **Jane Schulze** was my teacher for the first two years I attended OPIS. She was caring and encouraging and helped me feel less anxious and more capable. She took my desire to work ahead and helped me map out a path to early entrance to college.

During my second semester at OPIS, I took my first class at Moorpark Community College, and since then I have taken classes at local community colleges every year. **As of the end of this current semester, I have completed my freshman year of college.** Attending OPIS gave me the opportunity to accumulate these college units, and I likely wouldn't have been able to do so had I gone through a more traditional schooling program.

Through OPIS, I have been able to continue taking high school classes while pursuing other interests. I have had time to devote to practicing my cello and to participate in the Conejo Valley Youth Orchestra. I have also had time to volunteer at my synagogue twice a week for the past three years. I was able to help in the deaf community by volunteering for Tri-county GLAD (Greater Los Angeles Agency on Deafness), after successfully completing four levels of American Sign Language at community college. I had time to develop my skills in fencing and participate in that sport for the past four years.

To a large extent, I was able to design my own education. At OPIS, my teachers understood my personal interests and goals. I have only had two teachers during my four years here. This allowed me to form close relationships, and my teachers were able to understand exactly what my capabilities were. For the last two years at OPIS, **Ty DeLong** has been my teacher. I especially enjoyed having the personal attention of a teacher to whom I was important. At a regular high school, my teachers may not even have known my name. At OPIS, I had a mentor, a guide, and I felt valued. It truly has been like a family to me.

At Channel Islands, I will be majoring in biology and minoring in performing arts. I have been awarded a scholarship for my field of study as well as my academic success. I'm extremely excited and hopeful for the upcoming school year!



Bianca Hofstatter

Makes US
Synchronized
Swimming
Team

Bianca Hofstatter is one step closer to achieving her dream of being an Olympic athlete. Over Memorial Day weekend, she competed with 20 of the best synchronized swimmers in the nation and was selected as one of the top ten, earning her a spot on the US National Synchronized Swimming Team. She will compete internationally and represent the US at the UANA Pan American Championship, which will be held August 12-16 in Riverside, CA.

At the end of April Bianca swam her solo in the association competition and earned a Gold Medal and a first place in figures. At Regionals in the end of May she won another Gold Medal and a second place in figures. She has qualified to go on to the National Championships in June in Washington State.

Bianca's days begin at 5:30 with strength training, stretching, lap swimming and two hours of rhythmic gymnastics conditioning. Her mom, Gerlinde, pictured with Bianca above, is one of her dedicated coaches. She remarked, "The OPIS program contributed hugely to Bianca's success with its flexibility to be an elite athlete and an excellent student at the same time."

We wish Bianca the best of luck as she continues to pursue her dream.



OPIS Beach Day



Congratulations, OPIS Graduates

A high five to all thirty-one OPIS graduating seniors

Riley Anenberg – Fashion Institute, become a buyer for a major department store

Megan Annino- Idaho State, San Francisco State, or Northridge, become a sign language interpreter

Maya Asulin- Traveling to Israel and working with the Workshop Volunteer Program (Habonim Dror)

Elisabeth Epperson – Moorpark College, become a personal trainer or actress

Mikayla Epperson – Moorpark College, pursue acting or become a counselor or coach

Amy Feuer – Alonzo King Lines Ballet, become a Professional dancer

Naomi Frias – Moorpark, accounting

Maxx Fisher – San Francisco State University

Naomi Fries – Accounting Trade School

Blake Gillette-Almquist – Azusa Pacific Uni., be president and owner of a small business

McKenna Kina – Santa Barbara City College, become a child life therapist or fashion stylist

Darin Klein – 2-year college, unsure of profession

Sam Lant – LA Community College, wants to become an engineer and work with NASA, become an astronaut

Joey Maroney – Full time software development

Angela Moreno – Ventura Community College

Elizabeth Mulville – Westmont, tennis pro

Haley Nanas – Moorpark College, actuary, business and engineering

Mackenzie Tinker - ITT Technical Institute, become a private investigator

Kim Weissman – Pierce Community College, veterinary medicine



OPIS's annual end-of-the-year beach day is just around the corner! Please join us for an all-school beach party at lifeguard station #12 at Zuma on Monday, June 9 from 11:00 – 3:00. Please fill out a permission slip (available online at <http://www.oakparkusd.org/Page/4829>) and give it to your teacher. Bring lunch and plenty of sunscreen! Parking is free on PCH and \$10 in the lot.



OPIS IS GETTING A NEW ADDRESS

IT'S OFFICIAL! OPIS WILL SOON HAVE A HOME OF ITS OWN! MOVERS WILL BE BUSY OVER THE SUMMER PACKING UP AND MOVING OUR BELONGINGS TO THE NEW SITE LOCATED ADJACENT TO THE DISTRICT OFFICE. OPIS WILL HAVE FIVE NEW BUNGALOWS TO CALL HOME! WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO BEING ON THE SAME SITE AS OUR PRINCIPAL AND HAVING A BIT MORE ROOM TO SPREAD OUT AND SERVE OUR STUDENTS BETTER.

Please bookmark our website <http://www.oakparkusd.org/Page/332> for instant access to the OPIS calendar, announcements, deadlines and answers to many frequently asked questions.