

the
Independent

Volume 9 No. 2

Winter 2015

Barbara Harrison, Editor

**OPIS Families
Decorate an
Award-
Winning Rose
Parade Float**

Story on page 5



OSB Takes Pride in Community Service



Thanks to OPIS, four families from Casa Pacifica had a memorable Christmas this year. Our student body organizations collected gifts and cash from students, faculty members and parents to fulfill wish lists from these needy families. One little girl received art supplies and her mother got coffee and candles. In addition, OPIS gave them each a sweater and boots. A young boy got his wish of a camera, while his dad was given coffee. Each received sweaters, shirts, and shoes. Two other families received gift cards, sporting goods, dolls, toys, toiletries shoes, clothes and art supplies, pictured at left.



The Middle School OSB is pictured here with shower packets they compiled with toiletries that were donated to the homeless shelter at Hope of the Valley Mission.

Our student body is learning that there is joy in giving and that there are many grateful families that are very appreciative of our generosity. OPIS is proud that we doubled our giving this year by helping four families, instead of the two that we served last year. Thank you to all of you who participated in this worthwhile community-giving project.



Message from Principal McGugan

Happy New Year!! I hope everybody had a great break and is rested for the upcoming semester. The staff and I want to wish you all a great start to the next semester and to the New Year. Once again, we

have students working on amazing things currently, and we are planning new ideas and happenings at OPIS for the following year.

We have just finished our final exams. It was amazing to see so many students working hard to study for their finals. When I walked by and saw students studying together at our courtyard tables, I felt proud of the direction we have taken the school. I think the students also exhibited pride in their work. They clearly have invested time into what they see as value in their education. I know finals can also be a stressful time, but all of our students and teachers did an amazing job. I want to thank our staff for working with the students to manage all of these finals over the week. They oversaw over 200 finals.

Our School Site Council team is working together to make OPIS registration an easier process next year. Currently, OPIS does not have barcodes on any of the books that students check out. We are aware that we may be losing money because of lost or damaged books. So, over the summer, once all books are returned (staff and student) we will work with our Site Council and parent volunteers to make sure that all books are properly labeled and entered into our student information system (Q). During the 2015-2016 registration, all students and staff will need to check out books using their ID cards. Books will be distributed on registration day instead of on the first day that they meet with their teacher. We hope to have everything organized, so that on the first day of school, your meeting runs smoothly. This will

also help us keep an accurate inventory and we will save money, all while holding students and staff responsible for all books. This system implementation is requiring many hours from several people and I want to make sure they are acknowledged for their work. The School Site Council, Debra Reublin, Gaby Reublin, Bianca Hofstatter, Gerlinde Hofstatter, Jacque Mills, Danny O'Brien, Lori Glazer, Barbara Harrison, and Cristina Sanchez, have been reviewing our registration process and textbook check out procedures. If you would like to help in this process, please do not hesitate to contact me.

We will also be getting extra support for our upper level high school math students who are enrolled in Geometry, Algebra 2, Finite Math or Math Analysis. Robert Ahdoot, from YAYMath.org, will be running eight math labs for us starting in March and ending in June. If you have not had a chance to check out his website, please do; he is absolutely amazing and incredibly entertaining. We are extremely lucky to have him join our staff to engage the students.

The Site Council is also working with our elementary and middle school teachers on a school directory. Teachers will be giving their students a form to fill out to indicate if their families are interested in appearing in the school directory. This will allow parents to communicate with one another on any fieldtrips, ideas, get-togethers, study buddy sessions, etc.

I would like to send a special thanks to Barbara Harrison for our wonderful newsletter. I have researched several other independent schools in the state of California and I could not find a better newsletter. Well-done Barbara!!! Thanks for keeping us informed on all the great things the OPIS family is doing.

Thank you,

Stewart McGugan



Halloween was a blast at OPIS! Both the high school and middle school OSBs held parties. The high school students had a BBQ lunch and costume contest. The middle school had treats and games. A good time was had by all!





OPIS Families Visit the USS IOWA

It was “All hands on deck” October 21 on the USS Iowa battleship at the Los Angeles Harbor in San Pedro. Dubbed “The Battleship of Presidents” this ship, built in 1940, has welcomed more US presidents than any other.

On our tour we saw the bathtub that was specially built for President Franklin D. Roosevelt. We learned how much food was required to support the 2800 sailors aboard during World War II – 100 tons of fresh fruits and vegetables, 84 tons of frozen meat, and 650 tons of dry stores.

The ship has four Phalanx Weapons Systems, each capable of firing an astounding 3000 rounds per minute, six anti-aircraft guns, nine 16”/50 guns on three turrets with a range of 17,575 yards each, sixteen harpoon anti-ship missiles with a range of 29 nautical miles each, and thirty-two Tomahawk long range cruise missiles with a range of 869 nautical miles.

We toured the room where the Invasion of Normandy was planned and saw the cramped living quarters of the sailors and the slightly larger accommodations of the officers.

Our students gained an appreciation of veterans past and present as each vet who boarded the ship that day was announced over the PA system. It was a wonderful way to make history come alive for our students.



Students Climb to New Heights at Boulderdash



*Top: Tyree defies gravity
Bottom: Happy and sore climbers look forward to a pizza lunch*

From novices to advanced climbers, everyone who scaled the rock climbing walls at Boulderdash in Westlake had a great time on our December field trip. Defying gravity on overhanging cliffs, shimmying up a 35-foot rope, and finding footholds on precarious outcroppings had our students scrambling and hanging on for dear life. This trip was all about overcoming fears, gaining confidence, and developing mental and physical strength. Without exception, our students did just that!

Science is Fun!

What do you get when you have a room full of kids, some liquid nitrogen and a mad scientist? At OPIS, the answer is ICE CREAM! At our first on-site field trip, OPIS students were in for a treat when Rob West from Sub Zero Ice Cream came to our school to demonstrate the amazing properties of liquid nitrogen.

We learned that nitrogen is usually a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas that makes up about 78% of the air we breathe. Rob put some liquid nitrogen in a bowl and we observed it boil...at a temperature of -321 degrees Fahrenheit! That's NEGATIVE 321 degrees! He put a flower in the bowl that immediately froze and shattered like glass when he threw it on the ground. Imagine the students' faces when he invited them all to put their fingers in that same bowl of boiling nitrogen! Amazingly, they did (for a nanosecond) and surprisingly, no one lost a finger. He explained why.

After a brief chemistry lesson that had the students at the edge of their seats and an outdoor demonstration of smoking gas (with the help of Bella Kandel) Rob used liquid nitrogen to make the most delicious, thick, rich, and creamy ice cream we have ever tasted. This is a science lesson none of us will ever forget!

*Mad scientists
Rob and Bella
pour water
on liquid
nitrogen*



Save the Date!

The 2nd Annual
Oakchella will be taking
place on Sunday, April
26th. Tickets will be on
sale in early spring.



Teachers Enjoy Holiday Brunch

With holiday music playing and cinnamon scenting the air, a little holiday magic visited room R-2 in December as the staff gathered for an informal brunch in between student meetings. Pictured above are counselor, Jeremy Rogers, teachers Carolyn Purkey and Kate Thompson, Principal McGugen, Oak View Office Manager, Linda Roberts, teacher Lori Glazer, and Cristina Sanchez, our indispensable Student Services Assistant. A big thanks to Ty and Kindie DeLong for hosting our amazing staff party at their home in early December. The gift exchange was a big hit!



OPIS Families Help Decorate an Award Winning Rose Parade Float

by Haley Gilchrist, 6th grade

Usually the day after Christmas my family and I just relax or exchange clothes that don't fit, but this last year was very different. My mom and I decided to join the OPIS field trip to go to decorate a float for the 2015 Rose Parade. It was an amazing trip!

When we arrived at the Rose Pavilion in Pasadena, OPIS signed in with a group called "Petal Pushers". This group is one of several volunteer groups that decorate the floats. Our first job was to work with statice. Statice is a purple flower but on TV it looks like the color blue. We trimmed the petals of the statice and filled large box lids. After the lids were full, the petals were then put in a blender and blended into a fine, sawdust type of mixture. This mixture was then mixed with glue and painted on the floats.

Our next job was to work on the actual float. OPIS worked with other volunteers on the Princess Cruises' float. It was exciting to be a part of this crew since it was the first time Princess Cruises had entered a float in the parade. The float was titled "50 Years of Inspiring Travel" and had many of the world's most popular travel destinations made from flowers.

I worked with Bianca, Mrs. Cox, and Mrs. Harrison way up high on scaffolding decorating the tower of Moscow. We glued on cut lentil beans, flower straw, lettuce seeds, crushed walnut shells, and black beans. The work was very detailed and

the glue was VERY sticky.

While we worked on the Kremlin, my mom and some of the other OPIS crew worked on the Leaning Tower of Pisa. They applied lima beans, black beans and crushed rice. It was incredible how all the different seeds combined together made everything look so realistic!

We worked until 6:00 PM and then had a dinner break. There were hundreds of volunteers and we all ate outside. It was REALLY cold but it was like a big, pizza party. After dinner we worked for another hour and then it was time to go home.

The day had been so much fun. On New Year's Day, I watched our float on TV as it went down Colorado Blvd. I felt so proud to have been a part of it, and the Princess Cruises' float won the Craftsmanship Trophy for most dramatic use of flowers.

I really hope I can do this again next year. I now have a new appreciation for the floats in the Rose Parade. I made lots of new friends and memories!

*Photos:
Bianca Hofstatter and Haley
Gilchrist,
Eliot Cox and Madison Mills,
Barbara Harrison*



The Lady Washington

On a gorgeous January morning, OPIS students traveled to Channel Islands to board the **Lady Washington**, a replica 1787 two-masted brig sporting 13 sails. With calls of “Heave-Ho-Aye” our students were immediately put to work hoisting the sails, coiling the lines, and making sure the craft was “ship-shape” for our journey. Once under sail on a glassy sea, our group rotated among three learning stations.

At the Officers’ Station we learned how early sailors used a traverse board, sextant, and compass to navigate the high seas. We threw a “chop block” overboard and calculated the number of knots the ship was traveling by counting knots on the line as it spooled out. We learned that the officers often had better food and accommodations than the regular sailors, and they always had more education.

Below deck Sailor Mike explained some history of the original Lady Washington and discussed trade history. The original Lady Washington completed the first American expedition to the Pacific Northwest coast of North America from Boston. Its mission was to sail around Cape Horn and up the Pacific Coast to procure sea otter furs from native people, then trade them in China for tea. Our students were able to handle blocks of tea, trading beads, crude weapons, and spices, which were all traded from the ship.

Lastly, we learned about the life of a sailor. The students were shocked to learn that it was not unusual for nine-year-old children to go to sea. We learned about the many tools the sailors used to make and repair lines. We saw the hardtack and salt pork that were the sailors’ staple foods, and learned how sailors tied everything to themselves so that nothing would be dropped when they were up on the rigging.

The day ended on a perfect note as the crew led us in singing rousing sea chanties. What a fabulous hands-on learning experience for all of our students - elementary, middle and high school.

Top: The Lady Washington

Middle: Eliot casts out the chop block to determine the ship’s speed

Bottom: Mason uses a sextant for navigation





Student Spotlight

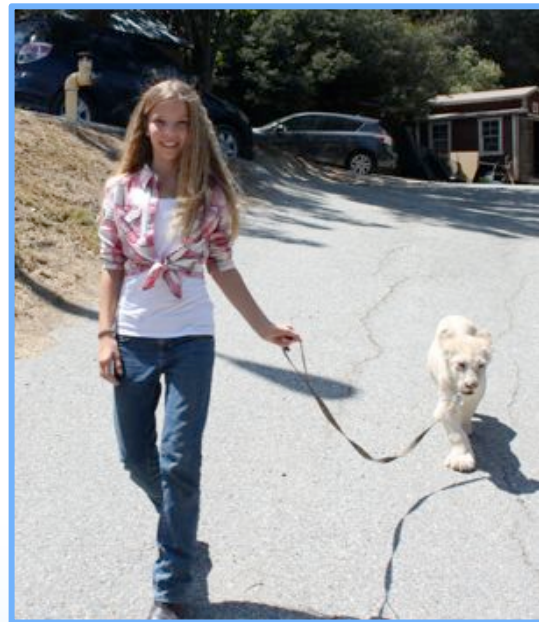
Veronika Mikulasek

What do a lion, fox, parrot, skunk, tarantula, and a camel have in common? This menagerie appears in a new family adventure movie, *Jimmy's Jingle*, starring OPIS 7th grader, Veronika Mikulasek (aka Veronika Bonell). Veronika plays Aurora whose grandmother owns 2nd Chance Sanctuary, where exotic animals are housed. The movie was filmed at Jungle Exotics in San Bernardino. Veronika spent a lot of time with all of the animals, establishing a special bond with Zuri, a beautiful lion cub. According to this talented actress, it was very important to be comfortable around the animals and to ensure that the animals were comfortable around the actors. "Working with the animals was challenging, but fun at the same time," she said. Veronika visited Zuri about a month after filming to find that he had grown to twice his former size. She could only play with him through the fence "But he was still very cute, loving and adorable."

Veronika's first feature film, also directed by Michael Sarna, was called *Tiger's Tail* where she played Penelope. You can see Veronika in the fifth episode of Marvel's *Agent Carter* as young Dottie, airing February 3 at 9:00 PM. Our congratulations to this up and coming star!



Veronika and Zuri on the set of *Jimmy's Jingle*



Upcoming Field Trips

- February 12 – Search and Rescue Dog Training Facility, Santa Paula (Full)
- March 17 – Leonis Adobe, Calabasas
- April 22 – Riley's Farm, Civil War Reenactment, Oak Glen
- May 1 – International Printing Museum, Carson
- June 8 – Zuma Beach Party

OPIS Gymnasts Excel in Local Meet

A trio of OPIS girls who train at Victory Gymnastics Academy participated in the Hollywood Open gymnastics meet at Coach Patty's in Camarillo this weekend taking home several coveted awards.

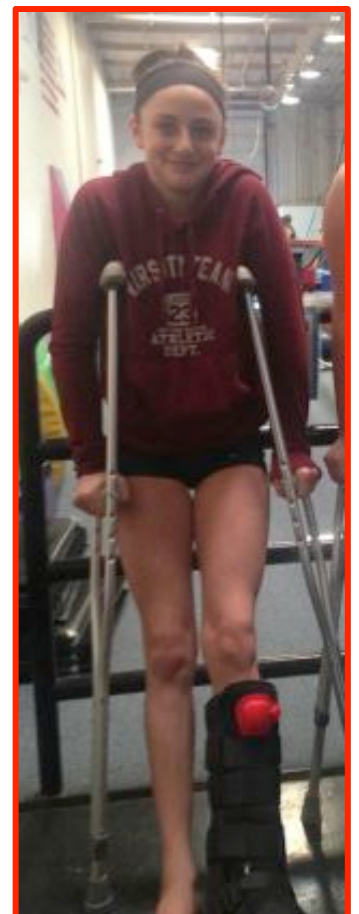
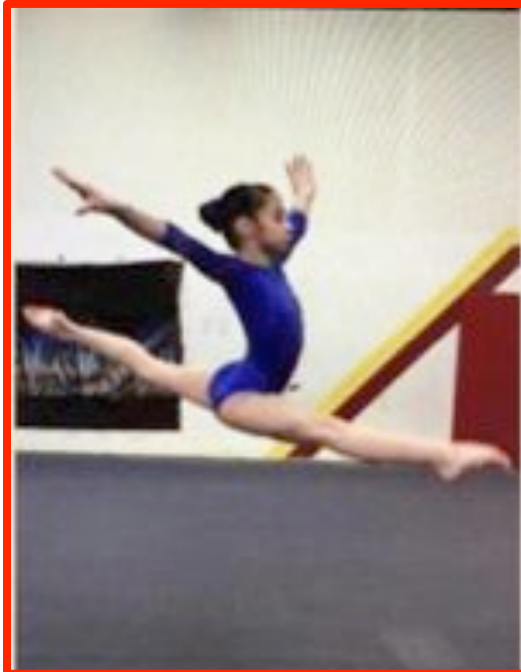
Kudos to fifth grader **Zara Waddell Jordan** who competed in her second Level 8 Meet. Zara took home a first place in Vault and All-Around, second on Bars and third on Beam!

Seventh grader **Taylor Pearson**, in spite of suffering from bronchitis, had her best meet in three years, scoring a 4th place on Bars and earning a position at the upcoming state competition in Long Beach.

Sara Ulias, 7th grade, placed 1st on Bars, Beam, Floor and All Around, and 2nd on Vault, in the 12-13 age division.

Unfortunately, 8th grader Alexa Solomon, was unable to compete due to a fractured foot. We hope she is able to compete in the upcoming state championships.

Congratulations to all of these talented athletes!



*Victory Gymnasts
Top: Taylor Pearson
Bottom: Zara Waddell Jordan,
Sara Ulias, and Alexa Solomon*



OPIS Students Star in Popular CBS Drama, *Scorpion*

If you are one of the 14.5 million fans of the new CBS third-ranked drama, *Scorpion*, you should know that two of the stars can cite OPIS in their resumes! OPIS graduate, **Ari Stidham** plays the loveable human calculator, statistician, OCD and anxiety-sufferer, Sylvester Dodd. Fourth grader, **Riley Smith**, plays Ralph, the genius son of Paige who needs help raising a protégée. This widely popular show airs on Monday nights on CBS at 9:00. It is loosely based on the life of real-life genius, Walter O'Brien who reportedly has an IQ of 197, and his team of geniuses who race around the globe solving high tech threats. Check it out for some action packed drama and get a glimpse of our talented students!



Bianca Hofstatter Conquers the Rhythmic Gymnastic World



You may recall reading about **Bianca Hofstatter** in previous issues for her accomplishments as a nationally ranked synchronized swimmer. She has now moved from the pool to the top of the podium as a #1 ranked rhythmic gymnast!

Bianca began training at Rhythmic Academy in August to improve her flexibility for synchronized swimming. She was inspired by her friends to try working out with hoops, balls, ropes, and floor routines. She jumped into the Level 5 rhythmic training program, devoting four days a week and 14 hours of training to it, in addition to her work in the pool.

Bianca's work has paid off. She qualified for the club's first Invitational Competition, which took place in San Diego. She earned two 1st places, one 2nd and one 3rd. On January 22 she entered LA Lights Tournament of Champions, the largest Multi-level Rhythmic Gymnastics Event in the World. Here this neophyte gymnast stunned the competition taking away four 1st places, one 2nd place and earning the title **Best Rhythmic Junior All-Around Gymnast in Level 5**. Way to go, Bianca!

OPIS Teachers Take Advantage of Multiple Training Opportunities

Ever wonder what your teacher is doing away from school? Sometimes weekends and “days off” mean more schooling for OPIS teachers. Such was the case for Kate Thompson, Kate Edwards, Lori Glazer, DJ Cook, and Jeremy Rogers in October when they all attended the California Consortium for Independent Study Conference in San Diego. Our teachers participated in workshops in all subject areas and learned about new laws and regulations for Independent Study programs in the state.

Lori Glazer attended a weekend conference of the National Council of Mathematics Teachers in Palm Springs. This K-12 conference offered hundreds of sessions. Lori brought back lots of new ideas to implement in Math Lab with her students.

Danny O’Brien, and Ty DeLong are currently being trained in **Inquiry Based Learning** from the UCLA Lab School. The trainings involve full day explorations into planning lessons and assignments that allow students to have more control in their own learning. Both Ty and Danny have been enjoying and implementing many of the ideas into their own lesson preparations and meetings with students.

Additionally all of our staff will attend several hours of instruction in implementing the new **Common Core** standards. There are five days of training for elementary teachers as well as at least one full day for each of the middle school and high school core subject areas of math, history, language arts, and science. One day of training will be devoted to physical education and the arts.



Princess Pork Chop

Barbara Harrison

She comes to school in purple frock,
Pink roses on her thighs,
Silver jewels around her neck,
Long lashes grace her eyes.

Purple pumps upon her toes,
Rosy cheeks and upturned nose,
Puckered lips all painted red,
Black feathered hat upon her head.

This pig, she is a-stylin’,
She’s a swine that oozes class
A darling diva strutting stuff
With swagger, style, and sass.

This elusive Madame
Is a showoff and a tease
She shows up periodically
Wherever she may please.

If you should come upon her,
She is sure to make your day.
Slip a note inside her
And send her on her way.



Starbound By Haley Gilchrist

This past weekend was my first dance competition of the year. It was called “Starbound” and it was held at Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center. My studio, Thrive Dance Center, did an amazing job! My teen tap group got Elite Gold and placed 2nd overall. Teen Hip Hop received Elite Gold and also got 2nd overall. And Teen Lyrical got Elite Gold and placed 4th overall. Thrive had many other dances that received the Elite Gold and High Gold medals. Our studio also received the “Best Studio” award for being the most friendly and supportive to all the other competitors! Way to go Thrive!!!



Rotary Essay Contest

Sharpen your pencils and your wits because it's time to begin your essay, "The 4-Way Test and Me" for the annual Rotary Essay Contest. OPIS has been well represented among the winners in past years and we want to continue this winning streak.

The goal of the contest is to encourage students to think about the meaning of the 4-Way Test, which was developed by Rotary Club International to be used as a guide in personal and professional relationships.

In their essays, students should address a personal situation in their lives that posed a dilemma or challenge that they solved ethically and morally by asking themselves:

1. Is it the TRUTH?
2. Is it FAIR to all concerned?
3. Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?
4. Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

There will be one essay winner for first place (\$175), second place (\$100), and third place (\$50) in each of these school levels - grades 1-6, grades 7-8, and grades 9-12.

Winners will be invited to accept their awards at the Rotary Club Luncheon on Wednesday, April 15, 2015. First place winners at each of the three school levels will qualify to enter the essay contest at the Rotary District 5240 level and may qualify for additional cash awards.

Essays should be turned in to your teacher by March 20. Minimum length for grades 1-6 is 150 words, grades 7-8, 200 words, and 9-12, 250 words. Essays will be evaluated on length, creativity, composition, grammar and punctuation, and focus on and completion of subject task.

Good luck to all our talented writers!



The Scholastic Art and Writing Awards by Alex Kukoff

The Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, which honors young writers under college age and whose alumni includes Sylvia Plath, Truman Capote, Richard Avedon, and Joyce Carol Oates among others, recently awarded me for three works — a poem, a screenplay, and a short story — of the six works I entered, one of which received the second place award of a Silver Key. I am honored to have received such a prestigious award, and eager to see where my writing takes me.

Following is an excerpt from one of the winning pieces: From Venus to Mars (The story is about a futuristic society in which women are separated from men, and a love that blossoms nonetheless. In this scene, the man is leaving the woman for his own society).

"I'll be okay," I assure him. He doesn't look convinced.

"Hey," I smile, "I never told you my name." I lean in closely so my lips just brush against his earlobe, and whisper my name into his ear. He stands to leave. "Goodbye."

"Goodbye."

I turn back home, but he calls after me. "Yes?"

He sighs. "Eva, walk proudly. You're beautiful."

The word — the most forbidden word in our vocabulary, too forbidden to print, let alone say — caresses me softly, like warm bath water or the soft fabric of the heels as Adam vanishes into the night.

It is beautiful.

Congratulations, Alex, on your many writing accomplishments!