

the  
**Independent**

Volume 8 No. 2

Oak Park Independent School Barbara Harrison, Editor

## OPIS Has a New Image

One of the first big decisions of the OPIS Student Body this year has been the selection of a new school mascot, school colors, and school logo. In a subtle nod to our superintendent, Dr. Knight, OPIS has chosen *the Knights* to be our mascot. The new logo/letterhead is shown on the top right with the backdrop of our new school colors- black, gold and white. Below is the graphic that you will see on T-shirts and sweatshirts in the future. Go Knights!

You may have noticed that our school is now easily identifiable from the street thanks to the work of Principal McGugan and his father who spent a weekend putting up the letters that were made by students in Oak Park High School's woodshop. Letters also identify each of our four classrooms. We are grateful for the time and effort of both Mr. McGugans whose dedication to OPIS has increased our school spirit and pride.



Watch for details  
 on the upcoming  
 See's Candy  
 fundraising drive!

### Save the Date

Saturday,  
 May 31

OPIS's 1<sup>st</sup>  
 Oakchella!

More details to follow

## Principal's Message

Welcome to the Spring 2014 school semester. I would like to welcome all of our new students to the program and wish them success in the new semester. Please take the opportunity to take advantage of our academic labs, field trips, and OSB (Associated Student Body). This is how you will be able to meet other students who have similar interests. If you do not participate in the various activities we offer, you may never meet new friends.

For all of the veteran students, I would like for you to look at the new semester as a fresh start by trying different things and by taking a leadership role in your education. Don't be afraid to come to our academic labs, our field trips or an OSB meeting, so you can show some of the new students how our school works.

I am very excited to announce that OSB should be an official club, verified by the school board, by March of this year. We have completed a constitution, by-laws, and election procedures and we also have an active bank account. We are looking forward to raising money at our annual concert to put in the new bank account. The students have many ideas on how we can help different organizations with our fundraisers.

I would like to remind students that they are allowed to take one elective course at either MCMS or OPHS. This is a great relationship that we have worked out with the two schools. A student must let Mr. Rogers, our counselor, know at the beginning of each semester that they would like to take the course. MCMS and OPHS students will first be enrolled in

courses followed by OPIS students where space is available. There are usually several spots available in courses such as foreign languages, athletic training, and art classes.

Friendly reminder: we are now going cupless at our school. We are requesting that all students bring their own reusable water bottles to school, so we can fill them up from water stations. We would like to keep in line with our National Green Ribbon School District values. Please remind your students to bring their environmentally-friendly refillable water bottles to school every day. Also, following with the theme of National Green Ribbon Schools, we will not be sending report cards home via US Mail. The only way to view your student's grades will be using our online Parent Connect "Q" student information system. You may receive your student's password through our administration office with either Cristina or Yoko. Below I have provided a link to our student information system. (High school and middle school only.)

<https://oakparkusd.vcoe.org/parentconnect/>

I would like to thank all of the parents that have reached out to me to offer their support in our programs and to say hello. I have met several parents throughout the year and I want to again encourage parents to contact me if they have any questions or to stop by and say hello.

Thank you,  
Stewart McGugan  
Principal



*Principal, Stew McGugan, was honored on Boss's Day October 16, 2013 with hand-painted banners in front of each of OPIS's classrooms.*





## Middle School Students Learn About Santa Cruz Island



Prisoners' Cove on Santa Cruz Island was the classroom for six OPIS middle school students who were selected to accompany Brookside Elementary School's 5<sup>th</sup> graders on a field trip October 18, 2013. Taylor Pearson, Terrell Ransom, Jr., Bianca Hofstatter, Raven Littlehailes, Elise Luthman and Lauren Palmer were under the direction of Island Packer's employee, Steve, who led them on a rigorous hike and taught them all about the history, geology, flora and fauna of the island. Our students eagerly shared their knowledge with the OPIS families who ventured to Scorpion Ranch, located on the eastern shore of Santa Cruz Island, on February 11, 2014.



*OPIS middle school students with their Island Packers' guide, Steve, hiked to a beautiful vista on the island. Steve explained the amazing ironwood tree that encompasses the entire hill in the background. One of the many island foxes native to the islands is shown on the bottom right.*



When dropping off and picking up your students at OPIS, please obey all traffic and parking laws. Please do not park in the red zones or block the double chain link fence gate or driveways. Thank you for keeping our students safe.



Four OPIS teachers, Carolyn Purkey, Ty DeLong, Barbara Harrison, and Phuong Hong, along with Principal McGugan attended the California Consortium for Independent Study Annual Conference in Anaheim November 18 and 19. Here we learned about the new laws, rules and regulations affecting independent study programs in the state. We attended several informative sessions including addressing Common Core standards, implementing online learning, personalizing independent study, and enlisting effective independent study practices.



Front: Cristina Sanchez and Phuong Hong  
Back: Kate Edwards, Yoko Mimori, Barbara Harrison and Stew McGugan



Front: Yoko Mimori, Danny and Kati O'Brien, Lori Glazer  
Back: Stew McGugan, Carolyn Purkey and Kate Thompson

### Can you name the missing teacher?

On December 1 the staff met at the Canyon Club in Agoura for dinner and to cheer on OPIS sophomore, singer, and songwriter, **Alexi Blue**, who brilliantly performed a program of original and cover songs. In our minds she stole the show!

## Study Halls

Did you know OPIS has two study halls? Check them out on Wednesdays.

**High School** – Room D-54 10:00 – 11:30

**Middle School** – Room D-51 11:00 – 12:15

Come and study with your friends!



Taylor Kasparian and Kyle Rozanski hit the books in Academic Study Hall



## The Nethercutt Collection

### Best Kept Secret in LA!

“Why have I never heard of this place?” “I’ve lived here my whole life and I’ve never been here before.”

“This place is amazing. I’m coming back here with the rest of my family.” These are some of the

comments expressed by participants in our December 5<sup>th</sup> field trip to the Nethercutt Collection in Sylmar.

This trip had a little something for everyone. We all admired the more than 130 beautifully restored antique, vintage, and special interest cars. Since we were there in December, the museum was decorated for Christmas and all of the mechanical musical instruments played Christmas carols for our enjoyment. The culmination of the trip was a performance of the incredible 5000 pipe Wurlitzer theater organ with it’s train whistles, thunder, bells, chimes, and various other sound effects used in early silent movies.

Before leaving, some of us toured the restored 1937 Canadian Pacific locomotive and ogled over the 1922 private Pullman railroad car which was owned by the daughter of E. J. “Lucky” Baldwin, the founder of the Santa Anita Race Track.



## Griffith Observatory

All who visited the Griffith Observatory on January 16 had a great day. Although we didn’t do any stargazing, the views of the city were incredible from the rooftop, site of the huge telescope. We saw two movies in the planetarium – *Water Is Life* and *Centered in the Universe*. The students enjoyed the interactive periodic table and the ever-popular and mesmerizing pendulum in the foyer.

## Upcoming Field Trips

March 12 – Jet Propulsion Lab

April 15 – Union Station/Olvera St.  
via Metrolink

May 21 - Getty Villa (Make your  
parking reservation on Feb. 21 \$15)

June 10 - Zuma Beach

All OPIS students and their families are welcome to attend these trips. Please email [bharrison@oakparkusd.org](mailto:bharrison@oakparkusd.org) if you’d like to sign up. More info can be found at <http://www.oakparkusd.org/Page/4793>.



## Scorpion Ranch, Santa Cruz Island

We couldn't have asked for a more perfect day than the one we had for our amazing trip to Santa Cruz Island on February 11. It was warm, sunny, and absolutely beautiful. The one-hour trip over to the island was uneventful but the return trip made up for it! Surrounding the boat were hundreds and hundreds of dolphins frolicking in our wake. They raced along on all sides of the boat, leaping from the water and delighting all of the passengers. It was truly a magical experience! In the distance we saw a gray whale surface. From the island a few of us were treated to the breaching of pilot whales. Also on the island we had a glimpse of the endemic Island Fox.

Our guide, Laurie, led us on a hike to the point shown above where the vistas were incredible. She taught us about the native morning glories, which are a species unique to the island. We learned about the diatomaceous earth, made from tiny diatoms, which we mixed with water to make a paste that could be used as a sunscreen. You can see it on Matthew's cheeks in the picture above as he poses with his twin brother, Benjamin. The middle school students who traveled to the island in October contributed what they learned on that trip. Raven Littlehailes spoke about the disastrous effects of the insecticide DDT on the eagle population.

With its unique flora and fauna, exquisite scenery, and interesting history, it's no wonder these islands are nicknamed "the Galapagos Islands of North America." What a treat to visit them!



## Common Core Testing

Spring 2014 will mark the first time that students across the nation will be taking the new Common Core Assessments. California students will be administered the Smarter Balanced Assessments designed to measure student progress toward college and career readiness. The test will cover English Language Arts/Literacy and Math. Additionally, 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders will take the STAR test in Science. Testing dates are as follows:

3<sup>rd</sup> grade – May 12 Math/Language  
 4<sup>th</sup> grade – May 13 Math/Language  
 5<sup>th</sup> grade – May 9 Science, May 14 Math/Language  
 6<sup>th</sup> grade – May 15 Math/Language  
 7<sup>th</sup> grade – May 13 Math/Language  
 8<sup>th</sup> grade – May 5 Science, May 14 Math/Language  
 10<sup>th</sup> grade – May 7 Science  
 11<sup>th</sup> grade – May 16 Math/Language

## 2013 Gymnastics State Championships

by Sara Ulias, grade 6

My heart was pounding through my chest, and in my mind, my whole body was as shaky as a Chihuahua, but I was actually perfectly still! It was the day of the Gymnastics State Championships and all of my coaches, teammates, and especially my family, were there in the Long Beach Convention Center to support me. I was already nervous, but nobody had started competing yet; every athlete was just warming up! I was feeling a little antsy because I was watching the other teams warm-up, and they all looked like very talented, gifted, strong-minded gymnasts.

My team's first event was the balance beam. I was nervous for this event being the first one of the meet because gymnasts are usually timid on their first event. One by one, every girl on my team performed fairly solid routines. It was finally my turn. I was last to compete for my team. My coach came up to me right before my turn, and he kept telling me, "You can do it!" and, "Be confident!" After my routine, which only had a few minor wobbles, I spotted my score, which was a 9.550! All of my teammates congratulated me by saying, "Great



job!" or "That was an awesome routine!" I was glad to get beam over with because, at competitions, beam is a little nerve-wracking for me.

The next event was the floor exercise. Although I was less nervous for the event, I was still worried because I had a bad experience at the Sectional meet, the competition before this one. I just told myself, "It will be fine" and "I can do it." I successfully made it through my routine with minimal errors, leading me to a great score of a 9.650! I was relieved to get beam and floor out of the way because they are the hardest events for me.

The vault was the third apparatus. I felt very certain and sure of myself because vault is an easy event for me. All of my warm-up vaults were solid so I had no worries. Once I got the signal to compete, I focused on me and myself only. I finished the first vault with a perfect stuck landing! I then hurried down to the end of the runway and performed a carbon copy of my first vault! The highest score out of both of my vaults turned out to be a 9.525!

The last and final event of the meet was the uneven bars, which was also my best event. I felt so confident and self-assured that I almost thought the meet was over for me. Once again, and to top off one of my best meets, I stuck the landing, scoring a nearly perfect 9.725!

During the awards ceremony, I sat listening to many different gymnasts' names being called up to the podium. Then, I suddenly heard my name called up for every event! My final places were third on beam, third on floor, second on vault, first on bars, and... first place in the all-around with a score of a 38.400! I was the State Champion!

## Names in the News

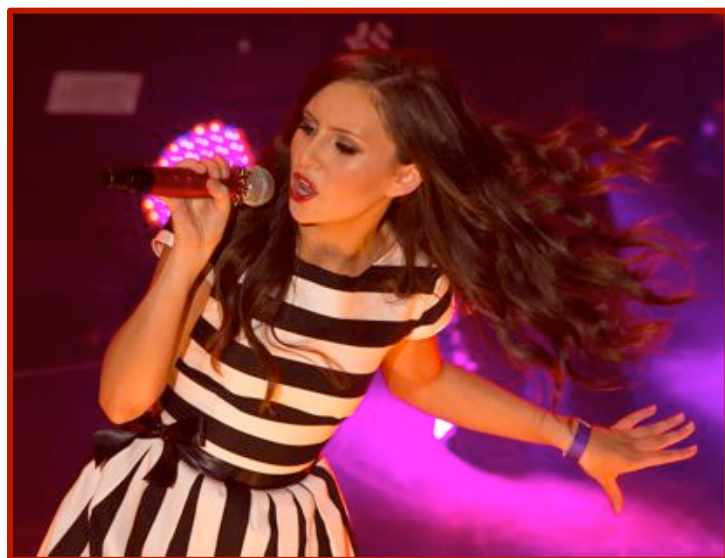


**Gaby Douglas and Dakota Grant**, OPIS students and gymnasts, met at the Justin Bieber movie premiere. Dakota recently earned four medals at the Lady Luck Invitational Gymnastics Meet in Las Vegas and Gaby interviewed Super Bowl players in her role as a correspondent for Inside Edition.

**Ashley Thomas**, 5<sup>th</sup> grader, rode on the Dole float, *Sunrise At The Oasis*, which won the coveted Sweepstakes Award at the Rose Parade in Pasadena. Ashley is shown standing in the picture on the right.



**Jake Walker**, OPIS junior and Oak Park High School quarterback, can solve a Rubik's Cube in 46 seconds!



**Temara Melek**, pictured above, was the opening act for Demi Lovato at the Belasco Theatre in downtown LA on Oct. 28th. This intimate show for the fans of "Lovatics" and "Tematics" was streamed live on [www.2vlive.com](http://www.2vlive.com) all over the world. Temara is currently signed to management in the UK under Straightfwdmusic. She shares her time between Los Angeles and London, England while working on her career. Her latest single *Karma's Not Pretty* is on iTunes and her video is on her VEVO channel. Temara moved to LA from Colorado over three years ago to pursue her career. She was a competition dancer all her life and has also done acting and modeling. She is currently signed to CAA agency (live and theatrical) in LA and her goal is to some day have her own headlining world tour.



**August Maturo**, first grader and actor in *Girl Meets World*, reads *Amelia Bedelia* to Lacie the therapy dog at the public library for the Waggin' Tales Program where kids read books to service animals.





**Blake Tingzon** placed 1st All Around at the The 2014 Houston National Invitational Gymnastics Competition in Houston Texas. Blake competed Level 7 in all 6 men's events against athletes from all over the United States as well as countries including Mexico, Cuba, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Australia. Blake is 12 years old and trains at Gymnastics Olympica USA.

## PE Testing

Fifth, seventh and ninth graders throughout California are required to participate in PE testing.

“The main goal of the test is to help students in starting life-long habits of regular physical activity. Students in grades five, seven, and nine take the fitness test. The test has six parts that show a level of fitness that offer a degree of defense against diseases that come from inactivity.”\* The six components of the test are:

### Aerobic Capacity

PACER (Progressive Aerobic Cardiovascular Endurance Run)

One-Mile Run

Walk Test (only for ages 13 or older)

### Abdominal Strength and Endurance

Curl-Up

### Upper Body Strength and Endurance

Push-Up

Modified Pull-Up

Flexed-Arm Hang

### Body Composition

Skinfold Measurements

Body Mass Index

Bioelectric Impedance Analyzer

### Trunk Extensor Strength and Flexibility

Trunk Lift

### Flexibility

Back-Saver Sit and Reach

Shoulder Stretch

Carolyn Purkey will be administering the PE tests at OPIS on the following days:

Grade 5 – Friday, May 9th at 12:00

Grade 7 – Tuesday, May 13th at 1:30

Grade 9 – Wednesday, May 14th at 1:30

\*<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/pf/>



Curl up



Trunk Lift



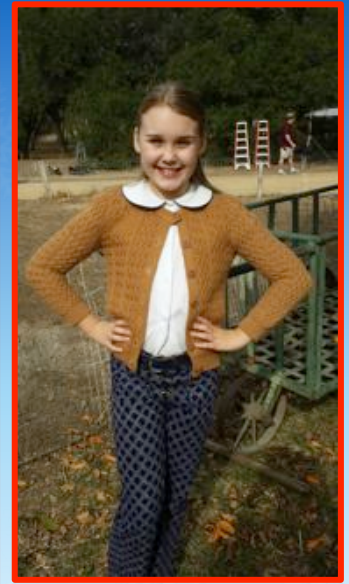
Push up  
Flexed-Arm Hang  
Shoulder stretch



## OPIS Students On Stage



**Zach Callison** (on the couch above) is performing in *Firemen* at the Atwater Village Theater in Los Angeles with The Echo Theater Company. Shows run through March 16<sup>th</sup>. According to Zach's mom, this is his "most dramatic and moving role to date." Note: This play is for mature audiences only.



Fifth grader, **Haley Gilchrist**, recently danced on a new TV pilot called *Growing Up Fisher* (above left). Haley will appear in episode 7 entitled *Work With Me*. She choreographed the ballet number used in the recital scene. You can also see her as Susie Rogers on the TV show *Mad Men* (above right).



**Ashley Thomas** is playing Bielke and **Griffen Hamilton** is playing Daniel in *Fiddler on the Roof* at Moorpark's High Street Theater through March 9. <http://www.hsac45.com/>

**Bella Kandel** is starring in *Into the Woods* at Center Stage Agoura in March. Bella plays Cinderella and Rapunzel in this Sondheim and Lappine fairy tale designed especially for young performers. **Calista Loter** plays Little Red Riding Hood. OPIS parent, **Paige Loter** is directing this play for homeschool students in the area. Call (818) 991-3030 for performance times.



## '13' The Musical!

**Griffen Hamilton** is the star in *13 the Musical* playing February 27, 28 and Saturday March 1 at The Performing Arts Education Center Mainstage at Agoura High School.

'13' is a grown-up story about growing up! When his parents get divorced and he's forced to move from New York City to a small town in Indiana, Evan Goldman (GRIFFEN HAMILTON) just wants to make friends and survive the school year. Easier said than done.

Griffen is a 7th grade student at OPIS. He enjoys being on the stage more than anything else and would be honored if you came out to see him and the rest of the cast perform in '13'.



# And When They Are Not Studying...

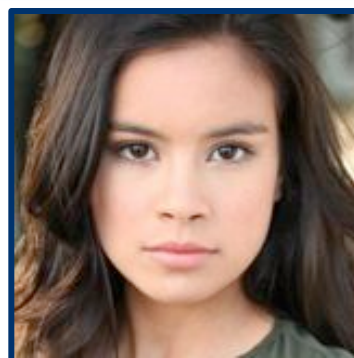


**Zendaya**, formerly of Disney show *Shake It Up* will be starring in a new show created just for her! Zendaya is Super Awesome Katy in the show of the same name. She plays a 16-year-old black belt and computer whiz whose parents are spies and expect her to follow along in their footsteps.

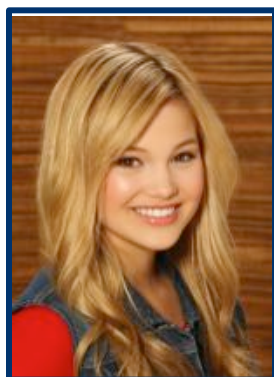
In other news, Zendaya's hit single, *Replay*, has gone platinum! Congratulations to this multi-talented rising star!



Joining the ranks of Britney Spears and Fergie, actress and model, **Bella Thorne**, is the new 2014 Candie's girl promoting a new line of Candie's shoes for Kohl's. The campaign's theme is "Always look on the pink side of life." Things are certainly looking rosy for Bella!



**Madalyn Horcher** has been cast in a TV mini-series called *Gracepoint*. The show is a remake of a British show called *Broadchurch*. Madalyn plays the part of Chloe Lasseter who is the smart and sassy sister of an 11-year-old boy who has been murdered in a small town.



OPIS high school students **Olivia Holt** and **Austin North** will begin production this summer in a new Disney show called *I Didn't Do It*. The comedy is about competitive fraternal twins (played by Olivia and Austin) and their four best friends as they navigate their first year of high school.

**Olivia** is a singer, cheerleader, gymnast and actress you may remember from her roles in *Kickin' It* and *Shake It Up*.

**Austin** has been on several TV series including *Ant Farm*, *Kickin' It*, *See Dad Run*, and *General Hospital*.



My name is **Calista Loter**. I'm 7 years old and I am a level 3 gymnast. I won 1st place on uneven bars at the LA classic meet in January. I was so proud of myself. I got my highest score EVER, a 9.25 on bars. I was also proud of my team. We got 2nd place two meets in a row. I love gymnastics sooooo much!

# Students Shine on Presidents' Day Weekend

**Alex Schulman** attended the Hollywood Vibe Dance Convention and scored Platinum in a small group Musical Theater. Alex scored 1st place in a Hip Hop Trio and 1st place in a Small Group Jazz. In addition, he was awarded two Individual Scholarships - one for BEST JUNIOR HIP HOP and a chance to compete at Nationals later this year. The other was for a chance to audition for a Dance Agent. However, Alex just signed with Movement Talent Agency earlier this month and so he is already on the road to fulfilling his dream of dancing for a living!



Bianca Hofstatter



Alex Shulman

Waking up at 4:30 AM, training in Riverside and Marina Del Ray, and doing schoolwork while working on stretching and flexing exercises have paid off for 7<sup>th</sup> grader, **Bianca Hofstatter**. Bianca braved a bad cold and freezing temperatures as she competed for a spot on the US National Synchronized Swimming team. Bianca was selected as one of the few entrants to be on the team. Impressing the judges, Bianca won a first place in flexibility, a fourth place in figures and was 7<sup>th</sup> overall in a very select group of athletes. She performed land skills and speed swimming in addition to her comprehensive figures. Bianca is one step closer to goal of competing for the United States in the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo!



Story submitted by Elizabeth Schick

**Christian and Harrison Schick** enrolled in OPIS at the beginning of this year, and we are so happy to be a part of the OPIS family! Thanks to OPIS, the boys have been able to pursue their passion for professional acting without sacrificing a great education. OPIS has made it possible for our family to regularly commute between Los Angeles for the boys' acting careers, and Dallas, TX for our family business. We love OPIS! The boys are currently filming the series *Alien Encounters* for The Science Channel, playing a pair of identical twins in which one of the brothers is a hybrid and the other fully human. *Alien Encounters* will air beginning in May. They are also currently filming a couple of episodes for *Blood Relatives*, a show on the ID Discovery Channel. The boys' first *Blood Relatives* episode airs on March 27<sup>th</sup>.