

# SCHOOL WATCH

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

## Winter 2017 Edition

### **SUPER SATURDAY THANKS!**

The Oak Park USD Super Saturday Sustainability Fair and recycling event on February 4 organized by our Environmental Education and Awareness Committee was a big success. We collected 2,500 pounds of clothing, tons of electronic waste, paper for shredding, and other items that might have ended up in the landfill otherwise. Students were able to build small solar cars, adults were able to test drive full size electric cars, and find out how much money can be saved by driving



Electronic Recycling at Super Saturday



Fresh Cut Herb Bouquets from our School Gardens

one while significantly reducing your carbon footprint. People learned about using native and California friendly plants in the landscape from the experts, and everyone loved the rescued California animals including owls, and a huge turkey buzzard. The plight of our oceans was the topic at the Sea Shepherd booth. Many thanks to the hundreds of you who came and we are already planning next year's event. It's always the day before the Super Bowl!

## PARCEL TAX RENEWAL - Measure A

The Board of Education voted to place the renewal of the Oak Park USD Parcel Tax before the voters in a special all-mail election to be held on May 2, 2017. This measure generates approximately \$900,000 per year for our schools. These funds are used to pay for additional teaching positions and so are responsible for creating lower class sizes at all levels, K-12. **Specifically, these funds pay for six elementary teachers and five secondary teachers.** The loss of these funds would negatively affect class sizes at all levels and reduce some of our core science, technology and math offerings.

The parcel tax was first approved by voters in 2003 for a period of five years, and then voters renewed it in 2008 for eight more years. Both times it passed with over 80% support. It expires on June 30 and requires a 66.67% YES vote. The amount is a simple \$197 per parcel in Oak Park and it does not increase current tax rates. Senior citizens (65+) who live in their homes may file for an exemption from the tax. This time the measure also allows people with disabilities to file for an exemption. **Also, a provision has been included in**

**Measure A that will only require a single exemption with an automatic annual renewal for our senior citizens and the disabled.**

The parcel tax is entirely different than bond funds. The Districts bond funds can only be used to pay for facilities, equipment, and technology only. Bond funds cannot be used for ongoing expenses such as class size reduction, which the parcel tax is used for. The county has designed the renewal measure as **MEASURE A**. All registered voters will receive a ballot in early April.

Information Sessions have been scheduled at each school during regular PTO meetings. Parents and community members are invited to attend:

- Brookside School – 2/22 8:30 AM
- Red Oak School – 2/24 8:30 AM
- Medea Creek Middle School – 3/2 9:00 AM
- Oak Park High School – 3/3 8:30 AM
- Oak Hills School – 3/24 8:30 AM

Also, if you have questions and are not able to attend one of the information sessions, please call (818) 735 3206.

## CAMPUS CLUBS TAKE OFF AT RED OAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

When you think of student clubs you think of secondary students, but this year at Red Oak Elementary School two clubs have been created by students for students. Each of these clubs expands upon student interest and is run by students with assistance from parents.

The Math Club was created out of a love of mathematics. Fourth grade student, Sahana Sri, had a talent for math and enjoyed engaging in learning ever more complicated and hard math problems. She competed for and was accepted to join the prestigious Los Angeles Math Circle for young students with advanced math skills offered by the UCLA math department. Wanting to share her love of math and what she is learning at her advanced classes, Sahana and her mom started the Red Oak Math Club. The response has been tremendous and there is a waiting list for the club that meets once a week to solve complex math problems.

Currently popular on the Red Oak campus are Rubik's Cubes. Two brothers, Tyler and Dylan Cash, were so intrigued with the puzzle that they recently attended a Rubik's Cube convention and competition. The boys learned a lot and decided to share their knowledge with their classmates by starting a club. The popular Rubik's Cube club for Red Oak 3rd, 4th and 5th graders meets once a week.

The last of our three campus clubs is not new. The Red Oak Run Club started last year. All students are invited to run laps around the Red Oak play field to start their day off right and enjoy the benefits of good health. The laps are tracked electronically using wristbands and scanners. Parent volunteers man the scanners and organize the activity which is run three mornings a week before school starts. Parents Jessie Prince and Bernhard Staschik were instrumental in creating this club. Special prizes are awarded to students who accumulate enough laps to equal a marathon.



## SOLAR POWER PROJECTS

The first project from Measure S, the bond measure passed in November, is the installation of solar panels at all Oak Park schools. The systems will all be shade structures located on the school playgrounds and fields, except at Oak Park High School and District Office, where they will be carports. The cost of the systems is \$6.8 million, and they will generate 1.3 million watts of power per year and save over 85% of our cost of electricity. The savings will be most welcome as we enter into what appears to be a new era of state budget cutting for schools. In the first year, our projected savings is expected to be \$370,000 from our general fund. The savings will increase each year due to the projected increasing cost of electricity. The systems should be completed by June 30, a timeline that was decided upon in order to take advantage of a utility incentive that reduces on July 1. We will be holding an information session about the projects on Wednesday, February 22 at 6:30 PM at Oak Park High School in Room G9. If you would like to see maps of the placements of the arrays at each campus you can visit this link to our website:

[www.oakparkusd.org/SolarProjects](http://www.oakparkusd.org/SolarProjects).

The project provides a significant benefit to the schools because the cost of the project is funded by

the bond fund, which are funds that can only be used for construction, equipment, and technology, and not for teachers or to support classrooms. The savings in electrical costs, however, will be used to support our classrooms. This is a way to leverage additional funding for our schools through a long-term investment in renewable energy. These costs have been on the rise each year, just going up 10% on January 1, for example. Other school districts, such as the Redondo Beach USD have done similar projects set up like this. The arrays are guaranteed to produce power at the projected rate for 25 years.

We specified that the panels be Made in the USA and are paying more because of that. However, they are the best and most efficient on the market today, produced by SolarWorld-USA.

In addition to the significant savings in our operating costs to our general fund, we will have new shaded areas at our schools, which can be used for a variety of educational or recreational purposes, including the first stage in the development of outdoor classroom areas at the K-8 schools. All of the structures are constructed to meet California State Division of the State Architect (DSA) requirements, considered to be among the most stringent in the world.

**This renewable energy project will have a significant positive environmental impact.**

**Here is a chart with the ANNUAL offsets.**

<b>2,154,621 Solar Array Output (kWh)</b>	
<b>Description of Savings</b>	<b>Quantification of Offsets</b>
Solar Array - CO2 Offsets	710 Tons of Carbon Annually
Solar Array - CO2 Offsets	1,419,895 Pounds of Carbon Annually Eliminated
Solar Array - Cars off the Road	127 Cars Taken off the Road for One Year
Solar Array - Gasoline Equivalent	73,190 Gallons of Gasoline
Solar Array - Tree Equivalent	43,092 Trees Cleansing the Air for One Year
Solar Array - Tree Planting Equivalent	1,077 Trees Planted for Life of Tree
Solar Array - Average Homes Powered	242 Homes Powered for One Year
Solar Array - Average Light Bulbs Powered	18,447 Light bulbs Powered for One Year

If you would like to learn more we are holding an information night about the solar arrays on Wednesday, February 22 at 6:30 PM at Oak Park High School, Room G9.



### OAK VIEW STUDENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In 1995, an unlikely relationship formed between the students at Oak View High School and those of the Lokrantz Special Education Center. Oak View teacher Christine Brown discovered that many of the students at this school went without Christmas presents due to their families' lack of funds.

Christine organized a gift-giving activity and students responded enthusiastically, purchasing gifts and happily delivering them to the Lokrantz students. After Christine's retirement, teacher Randi Liepman took over and continues to coordinate the program with the help of ASB leaders. Seeing the smiles on the students' faces evokes happiness and gratitude from all who participate. Oak View students look forward to returning every year to visit with the students and experience the joy of giving again.

### BROOKSIDE THIRD GRADE STUDENTS EXCEL AT PROGRAMING ROBOTS

Five teams from Mrs. Strong's third-grade class at Brookside Elementary School recently participated in the 2nd Annual Wonder League Robotics Competition, an international program including 5,000 teams from around the globe. Over two months, students designed solutions to real-world science and technology challenges by programming and building extensions for their Dash & Dot robots.

The Animal Dashers, one of Brookside's five competing teams, received a perfect score and have advanced to the Perfect Score round along with 280 other teams in their 6-8 age group. Another Brookside team, Team GLENT, which competed in the 9-12 age bracket, not only received a perfect score, but wrote their code with enough originality and simplicity to move on to the Final Championship Round of 30 teams. Additionally, this team was ranked #1 in all of California.

Congratulations to all of Mrs. Strong's third graders for their cooperative teamwork, determination, and problem solving mindset that guided them through this competition!



The Animal Dashers



Team GLENT

## CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION – LEARNING TODAY, PREPARING FOR TOMORROW

Members of our community may remember a time when vocational education was a mainstay of the high school experience. Wood shop, auto shop, and other skills-focused courses were available to students. For the most part, though, vocational education was seen as something separate from the academic courses. In recent years, accountability requirements and budget restraints squeezed out many of these courses, which provided students with job focused skills.



MCMS students show off a model of a roller coaster they built.

OPUSD is proud to be a part of the Career Technical Education, or CTE movement. According to the CA Department of Education, CTE is "a program of study that involves a multiyear sequence of courses that integrates core academic knowledge with technical and occupational knowledge to provide students with a pathway to postsecondary education and careers. The key difference between the older model of vocational education and CTE is the integration of academic and technical skills. [www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ct/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ct/)



Architectural Design Pathway Teacher Allan Prescott guides a student in the Oak Park High School Woodshop



OPHS students learn a new programming language.

CTE is organized around Career Pathways such as Arts, Media, & Entertainment, Engineering & Architecture, Health Science & Medical Technology, or Information & Communications Technology. These Pathways lead students through a course of study that allows them to deeply explore varied areas of expertise. These courses are rooted in core academics, while providing a meaningful introduction into 21st Century college and career options. Did you know that only 1 in 4 high schools teaches computer programming? After completing a CTE Pathway, students are prepared to find meaningful employment or enter college with a focus on a particular area of study.

At Medea Creek Middle School, students are learning how to integrate technology skills such as photography and videography, robotics, computer programming, and 3D design.



MCMS students create stop motion animation.

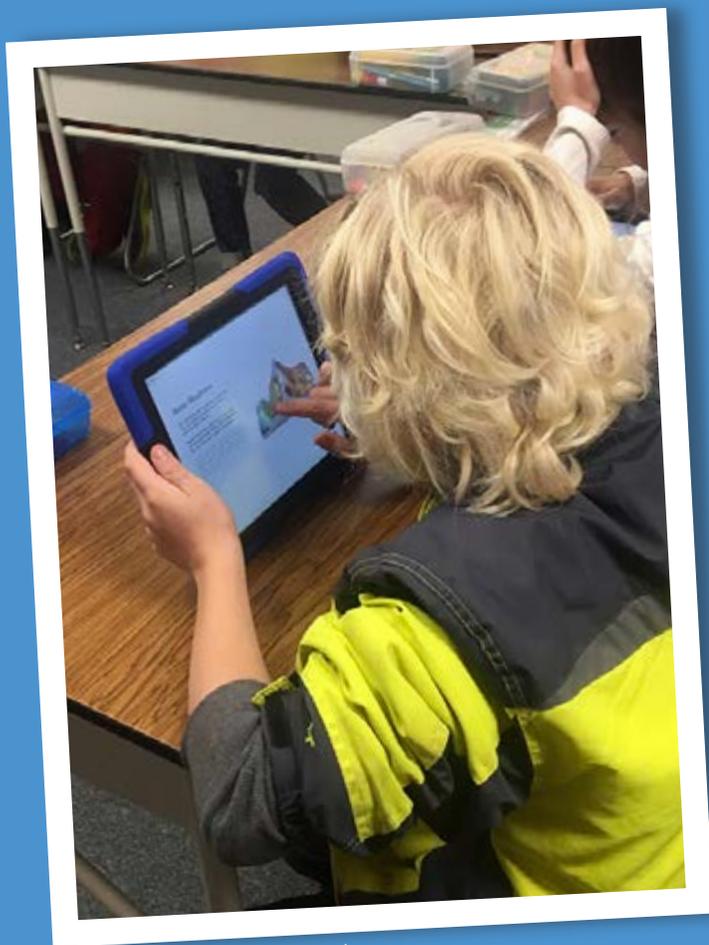
## NEW TOOLS TO ENGAGE STUDENTS

For the past few months' teachers have been trying out various tools that can help engage students in the learning process. One tool being used with students is Adobe Spark. Adobe Spark is a tool that helps students create voice narration for photos. A great example of this tool is this audio book created by a Kindergartner in Barbie Lee's class where students can listen to books they created. These books are powerful ways that students can demonstrate and voice their knowledge to a wide audience including fellow classmates, parents, and beyond the school.

If you would like to listen to a student story go to the website [bit.ly/kinderspark](http://bit.ly/kinderspark)



Kindergarten students learn how to use Adobe Spark



Students creations using Science Apps

A second tool is the implementation of Science apps inside the classroom. Earth Primer has interactive lessons about the water cycle, land formation, and biomes by allowing students to explore what happens when variables about these topics are changed. In these examples students are seeing what happens to the land around mountains when rain falls on a mountain and how mountains are formed.

## STEAM INITIATIVE

Things are STEAMing up in Oak Park. As part of the district's STEAM initiative and our mission to educate compassionate and creative global citizens the district science specialist Debbie Hammill, with support from Oak Park Education Foundation and Medea Creek MS PFA, has planned three major events this year:

### ODYSSEY OF THE MIND

The spontaneous event for Odyssey of the Mind was held at Medea Creek on February 1st and the regional tournament will take place at Westlake High School on February 25th. Odyssey of the Mind is an international creative problem-solving program that engages students in their learning by allowing their knowledge and ideas to come to life in an exciting, productive environment. Oak Park will have 10 teams with a total of 70 students competing for this year's competition.

### ROBOTICS TOURNAMENT

VEX Middle School Robotics Tournament was held at Medea Creek MS on February 4th. By its nature, the study of competitive robotics not only encompasses all four pillars of STEM education, but also encourages important life skills like teamwork, communication, and project-based organization. Medea Creek had 4 teams competing with a total of 36 students and 5 high school robotics team coaches, including our first ALL GIRLS team! 15 other teams from around the area competed. It was a wonderful experience to be able to host this event and encourage students to explore new ways of thinking and problem solving.

## STEAM CAREER NIGHT

STEAM Career night at was held on February 15 at Medea Creek Middle School for all parents and students in grades 4 -12. An integral part of a STEAM framework is to create a progression of career awareness to career exploration to career pathways. The evening highlighted the Career and Technical Pathways at the high school and connections to the middle school. Pathway teachers for middle school and high school were also available to answer questions and explain the course options. There were many industry professionals for students and parents to get valuable career information. Oak Park's CTE Pathways funded by the Ventura County Innovates grant are led by:

- Allen Hunt - Production and Managerial Arts
- Tony Peluce - Design, Visual and Media Arts
- Alan Prescott - Architectural Design
- Ken Jones and David Sloan Engineering Design
- Erik Amerikaner - Software and Systems Development

An added feature this year was a special speaker on a global issue that is driving new STEAM careers. Bonnie Atmore, President & Chief Empowerment Officer of FOOD Share – Ventura County's Regional Foodbank. National food security is a priority issue for us nationally, regionally, and locally.



VEX Robotics Tournament at Medea Creek Middle School

## OAK PARK HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC DECATHLON TEAM WINS BIG

The OPHS ACADECA teams competed against the largest field of schools ever assembled in the Ventura County Competition on February 4th. Coached by Robin Midiri and assisted by Jan Willis our team won the SuperQuiz for the third year in a row and came in third overall out of twenty schools. OPHS students made many trips to the stage at the Awards event at Pacifica High picking up a lot of medals.



Oak Park Academic Decathlon Team with their Awards



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## BROOKSIDE ELEMENTARY IS A KINDNESS CERTIFIED SCHOOL

Brookside has been acknowledged as Kindness Certified School as a result of the school-wide participation in the 2017 Great Kindness Challenge! This positive, powerful week mobilized students to create communities that are respectful, safe, compassionate and kind.



Brookside Elementary School Kindness Challenge

## BIG SUNDAY 2017

We are so excited to announce that the Oak Park Unified School District Community Outreach Committee is once again gathering volunteers to help beautify our schools, hiking trails and much more. In the past 4 years we have brought together hundreds of community members to plant trees, flowers, bushes, clean hiking trails, paint our drains to the beach, paint our curbs at all our schools, re-organize emergency storage sheds and supplies along with general cleanup of schools, parks and along our roads. We hope you will join us this year on May 7th from 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon. Come out and have breakfast on us at the high school, meet your neighbors and give back to your community. For more information, go to: [www.oakparkusd.org/bigSunday](http://www.oakparkusd.org/bigSunday)

## STAY CONNECTED WITH OAK PARK SCHOOLS

OPUSD wants to connect with you! Follow us as we highlight the great work taking place on our campuses.

Be ready to be awed and inspired by our staff and students.

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