

SCHOOL WATCH

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Spring 2015 Edition

OAK PARK HIGH STUDENTS TAKE 'BEST IN SHOW' AT CONEJO VALLEY ART SHOW

Oak Park High School art students did well at the Conejo Valley Art Show in April. Sponsored by the Agoura Hills Cultural Arts Council, in partnership with the Westlake Village Art Guild. There were 241 entries this year. The OPHS students recognized were:

First place in Drawing and Painting went to Laura Woo.

An Honorable Mention and Scholarship in Drawing and Painting went to Hannah Rose Balke and BEST IN SHOW went to Lauryn Wood.



- Dreaming of Dallas by Lauryn Wood, Best in Show



WALK FOR THE DOGS – MAY 9

Please bring your pooch and join us on Saturday, May 9 at 10:00 AM on the Great Lawn at Oak Park High School. There will be two courses this year – a short course for smaller or older dogs and a longer course for the others. \$10 requested donation will benefit the Jason Heigl Foundation, Hounds of Hope. Are you aware that 10,000 dogs and cats per day are euthanized in shelters across our nation? The Heigl Foundation provides grants to help care for and place animals in loving homes. They provide funds for and support our local shelters as well. You can find out more and fill out your registration form in advance by visiting <http://www.oakparkusd.org/spae>. You can also just come and sign the form when you arrive. Pawprint signatures are not required. The event is sponsored by the Oak Park High School S.P.A.E. club, (Students for the Protection of Animals and the Environment), Rachel Cohen, president.



SCIENCE FAIR MANIA!

Congratulations to Medea Creek Middle School for once again taking the top honors at the Ventura County Science Fair with the most awards. Many projects will be advanced to the State Science Fair. Students were honored by the Board of Education at the April 21 Board Meeting. Congratulations to MCMS and OPHS participants and awardees! A special 'Thank You' is in order for MCMS science teacher, Cindy Ligeti who coordinated the projects.

WHOLE FOODS GIVE-BACK DAY A SUCCESS

Whole Foods Market in Thousand Oaks offered Oak Park USD 5% of the take on Wednesday, March 18. This raised \$4000 for the Environmental Education and Awareness Committee. The Committee supports the school gardens, Earth Week activities, assemblies, and more. Much appreciation to those of you who shopped at Whole Foods that day.

FLAG DAY IS COMING – RECYCLE YOUR OLD FLAG

June 14 is Flag Day. If your flag is getting old and tattered and you want to replace it — what should you do with your old flag? You may bring your flag to any of our schools and we will send it for retirement and recycling. It is no longer considered safe to burn flags for many reasons, one being that the materials they are made of give off toxic fumes when burned. The flags will be recycled into new ones and cared for with respect throughout the process.



OAKVIEW HIGH SCHOOL ROTARY CLUB ESSAY WINNERS

Oak View High School continues its string of winning essays for the Westlake Rotary Club's annual essay contest. Ethan O'Connor, a junior, was awarded first prize, which garnered him an opportunity to read his entry to the esteemed group as well as a certificate, a cash prize, and the opportunity to compete at the state level. He wrote of how the 4-Way Test of Things We Think, Say, and Do has applied to his own life in various situations. Senior Carter Smith was awarded 3rd place, and junior Dakota Read earned an honorable mention. OVHS students have entered and performed well in this contest for over a decade. They are the only continuation high school in the area to participate, and go head to head with local traditional high schools, including Oak Park, Agoura, Oaks Christian, and Westlake.



OAK PARK INDEPENDENT SCHOOL STUDENTS WIN ROTARY CLUB CONTEST

On Wednesday, April 15, six Oak Park Independent School students were honored at a luncheon sponsored by Rotary International at the North Ranch Country Club. The 6th – 8th grade students were selected from a field of nearly 90 students throughout the Conejo Valley for writing exemplary essays on the topic of Rotary's Four Way Test. This test embodies the guiding principles of Rotary members and answers the questions: Of the things we think, say or do

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?

Subjects of the students' essays included friendship, autism, schoolwork, gymnastics, death, and getting along in a complex world. The winners in the 1st-6th grade division were Haley Gilchrist (6th grade) first place, and Eliot Cox (6th grade) 3rd place. OPIS students swept the field in the 7th-8th grade division. Seventh graders Jackson Gann and Terrell Ransom, Jr. took first and second place. Eighth graders Bianca Hofstatter and Alexa Solomon took third place and honorable mention. The first, second, and third place winners in each division brought home cash prizes. All the winners are students in Barbara Harrison's Writers' Workshop at Oak Park Independent School.



OAK PARK NEIGHBORHOOD PRESCHOOL – ABOUT US!

Our preschool is a tuition-based program that also receives grant support from First 5 California. OPNS is located on the campus of Oak Hills Elementary School and is a Reggio Emilia 'inspired' program. Reggio preschools are recognized around the world as the best research-based early childhood education programs. The difference from traditional preschools is that there is an emphasis on listening to the child and fostering self-expression, teamwork, and collaboration with peers and adults. This model requires a low adult-child ratio, an art specialist (atelierista) and an art studio (atelier). There are several Reggio inspired programs located on the West Side of Los Angeles and ours is the only one in this area. Our teachers have been trained in the philosophy and some have even traveled to Italy at their own expense for intensive workshops.

*"A school needs to be a place for all children, not based on the idea that they're all the same, but that they are all different."
Loris Malaguzzi, Founder*

If you would like to visit our school or apply to enroll for the 2015-16 school-year, please call (818) 707-7742 or visit our website <http://www.oakparkusd.org>



NEW SERVICE AWARD

A new student recognition program that will recognize students at all three academic levels (elementary, middle school, and high school) was approved by the Board of Education in April. The award will be called the Marie Panec Educating Compassionate and Creative Global Citizens Award, based on the District motto and in honor and memory of Marie Panec, a Board Member who passed away suddenly in 2010, who embodied these values. The criteria include any of the following:

- Exemplary service to the schools, community, or beyond
- Demonstration of compassion, empathy, creativity, and selflessness in their service
 - Demonstration of ethical, moral behavior – integrity, honesty, and sound moral values
 - Demonstration of anti-bullying efforts
 - Demonstration of social and environmental responsibility

The program will begin this school year. The recipients will be selected by the principals at the respective sites, and the award will be presented to as many as five students per school at the culmination/graduation ceremony by the superintendent and/or Board member. Teachers and staff are invited to recommend students to the principal for this award.

Note that we do not REQUIRE community service as a culmination or graduation requirement in Oak Park as the Board and previous Boards have felt that requiring service is counterintuitive to the concept of volunteering and the record keeping process would take time away from current staff or require the hiring of additional staff. With this new award, students who are volunteering and working for the common good will be recognized by Oak Park USD in a manner that will be highly public with the hope that they will inspire others to follow their examples.





ROCKET TEAM COMES CLOSE

We all like to win and come in first but as we know, that's not always in the cards even if we work hard at something. This year, the Oak Park High School Rocket Team built several rockets and flew over 50 flights but missed qualifying in the Team America Rocketry Challenge sponsored by the Aerospace Industries Association. Over 700 teams participate from around the nation and the top 100 scoring teams are invited to the National Fly-Off in May near Washington, D.C. The competition involves engineering and building a model rocket that will fly to exactly 800' in altitude and have a flight duration of between 46-48 seconds. It must also carry an egg that remains undamaged. The rocket must weigh less than 650g.

We had 9 Oak Park High School students on the team this year and they worked very hard on the project. Many also earned their high power certifications from the National Association of Rocketry, which is also a

comprehensive project on its own. The team would like to thank our sponsors this year, The Boeing Company, EBADS – Ensign-Bickford Aerospace and Defense, Friends of Oak Park Schools, and Underwood Family Farms for providing a field to conduct flights.

Congratulations to the seniors graduating this year: Captain, Steven Piurkowsky, Akshay Rao, Russell Tagawa, Daniel Maerowitz, and Matthew Gladstone. All of these students have been admitted to highly selective colleges and intend to major in the sciences. Underclassman members are Aviv Maish, Cooper McCloud, Trevor Feemster, and Thomas Cobain.

There will be five openings on the team in the fall. If your OPHS 9-12th grader (grades in 2015-16) is interested in applying they may visit <http://www.oakparkusd.org/rocketteam> for more information and an application.



WATER AID

In our efforts to cut down on the use of disposable water bottles in our schools, we have installed 'hydration stations' on all campuses with plans to install more. These stations allow students to refill their own reusable water bottles all day for free. We still sell disposable plastic water bottles, but we up-charge them so the buyer contributes 25 cents per bottle to WaterAid. Water Aid supplies water to impoverished communities in Central America and other parts of the world. Many children do not go to school because they have to spend most of their day porting water from community wells to their villages. So far this year, we have collected and sent over \$1600 to WaterAid!

EARTH WEEK IN OAK PARK SCHOOLS

Oak Park USD is a National Green Ribbon School District, selected by the United States Department of Education and the Environmental Protection Agency in 2013. We are the first in California and still one of only two in the state. Needless to say, Earth Week is a big deal in our schools thanks to the Environmental Education and Awareness Committee. This year the focus of the week was on soil, since this is the United Nations International Year of Soil. Children in the elementary schools learned about worms and worm composting, known as vermicomposting. Each school will start a worm composting program and classroom teachers have also been invited to sign up to receive a worm bin. We hope to be able to compost significant amounts of our food waste and use the 'castings' from the worms to enrich our school gardens. The schools are also having a CHANGE drive, where children are invited to contribute loose change to benefit an organization in Haiti, known as SOIL. Our goal is to raise \$2300 to build a composting toilet facility at a school. The organization builds composting toilets to help with sanitation issues and uses the compost to help restore the badly depleted soil on the island so that it can become productive again.

NEW ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS

Oak Park USD is the recipient of a grant from the California Department of Energy to install EV (Electric Vehicle) charging stations at Oak Park High School and Brookside Elementary School. Each school received units that charge four cars at once. The grant includes the installation of energy storage units, which are batteries that charge at night when our electricity rates are the lowest, and dispense it during the day, when the rates are the highest. The savings will pay for the cost of the car charging at all of the sites and provides even more savings in electrical costs to the District. Chargers received from grants from the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District have already been installed at Medea Creek Middle School, Oak Park High School, and the District Office/Alternative School campus. We have received another grant for chargers at Oak Hills and Red Oak, which will be installed over the summer. We provide EV charging at no cost as a benefit to employees and students. Others may charge their cars for a low hourly rate that covers the cost of the power.





MEDEA CREEK BAND WINS TOP HONORS AT MUSIC FESTIVAL

The MCMS Concert Band won a gold medal at the WorldStrides Heritage Performance Festival in April. More importantly, one of the Disney educators made this comment about our students: "They were the most amazing, well-behaved and focused group I had ever had the pleasure of working with." Many thanks and congratulations to their teachers, Elana Levine and Zach Borquez



RED OAK PRINCIPAL SLIMED!

Red Oak Elementary School principal, Dr. Jon Duim, allowed himself to be 'slimed' after the students raised \$28,000 in their annual jog-a-thon. Dr. Duim wins the prize as the #1 Good Sport in Oak Park. The children, not to mention the parents and teachers, very much enjoyed the show.

MEASURE C PARCEL TAX SENIOR EXEMPTION

The Oak Park Unified School District is accepting requests for Senior Exemptions for the Measure C Parcel Tax. Senior citizens 65 years old or older, or anyone turning 65 during 2015, who live in their home in Oak Park may go to the District's Support Services Office at 5801 E. Conifer Street, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to get an exemption form, or you may call to request a form be mailed to you by calling 818-735-3206.

Seniors must bring to the Oak Park Unified School District Support Services Office the completed

and signed form along with your 2014-2015 tax assessment bill with parcel number and address shown and proof of your age. Accepted forms of proof of age are drivers license/State I.D. card, passport or birth certificate. This must be your primary residence; rental properties are not eligible for exemption.

All exemptions must be submitted and verified by June 5, 2015. This exemption must be renewed annually in order to maintain eligibility.

SCHOOL STARTS ON AUGUST 11

Oak Park USD has changed the school calendar, starting with the upcoming 2015-16 school-year. The first day of school has been moved up two weeks to the second Tuesday of August – this year it is August 11. The last day of school for the 2015-16 school-year will be May 27. The primary reason for this change is to allow high school courses to be completed prior to winter vacation and allow our students to have a true study-free break. In fact, the Board of Education adopted policy that prohibits homework over the winter break for all students and for K-8 students over the other breaks during the school year. Students will also have the entire week off at Thanksgiving. Parents were surveyed and 70% approved of the changes. It is our hope that the calendar change will help our high school students to reduce and manage stress and allow more time in Advanced Placement classes to prepare for the national AP exams, which are given in May. New shade sails will be added over the play structures at all three elementary schools since the children will be in school two weeks earlier during the warmer late summer and early fall.



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REACH OUT TO OUR COMMUNITY

Would you like to be part of an effort to more fully integrate, give back to and enrich our Oak Park Community? If so, the Oak Park Unified School District Community Outreach Committee may be just the right match for you. Some of the activities the Community Outreach Committee has been involved with are: the "SchoolWatch" newsletters, Shakespeare by the Sea at Oak Canyon Park (in conjunction with Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District), Welcome Packets to new residents, a Measure R Presentation and Tour, Operation Gratitude Halloween Candy Drives, and the annual Big Sunday Day of Giving in Oak Park. We are continuing to implement most of the above, working towards "variations on the theme" in other regards and starting with new ideas as well. The committee would like to encourage anyone interested in being a part of the Community Outreach Committee to contact us by e-mailing the committee at: community@oakparkusd.org.