

# SCHOOL WATCH

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

**Winter 2014-2015 Edition**

## **5TH GRADE STUDENTS FROM ALL OAK PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS VISIT SANTA CRUZ ISLAND**

These trips to the Channel Islands National Park and National Marine Sanctuary are organized each fall for all of our 5th graders. This year we made four trips to Scorpion Anchorage on the east end of Santa Cruz Island. Students had lessons in advance of the trip with our new Science Specialist, Debbie Hammill, thanks to funding from our education foundation, Friends of Oak Park Schools. We learned about natural selection and how many of the animals and plants that live on the Channel Islands live only there and no other place on the planet. When we got to the island, some groups saw one of the best examples of this, an island fox. On the journey over, we also saw hundreds of dolphins, even rare pods of Risso's Dolphins. We were also treated to fantastic views of humpback whales on most of the trips and even spotted what was believed to be a rare hybrid fin/blue whale on one trip. Our students and parent chaperones had an opportunity to explore what is often called The American Galapagos and hopefully left with a deeper understanding and appreciation for the diversity of life on Earth and a desire to preserve and protect it.





## MEDEA CREEK MIDDLE SCHOOL GOES TO CATALINA ISLAND MARINE INSTITUTE

Over 300 Medea Creek 7th grade students as well as several parents and staff had the incredible opportunity to attend the Catalina Island Marine Institute for three days this November. It is the 32nd trip to Catalina for MCMS. Some of the activities included a night snorkel, shark tank petting and feeding, and kayaking. This years kayaking was exceptional and afforded the students the opportunity to view pods of dolphins and sea lions within 15 feet of their kayaks. It was a moment that will forever be ingrained in the minds of all who attended this magical trip.



## SUPERVISOR LINDA PARKS ANNOUNCES OPEN SEAT ON THE OAK PARK MUNICIPAL ADVISORY COUNCIL (MAC)

THOUSAND OAKS, CA (November 24, 2014) - Ventura County Supervisor Linda Parks encourages Oak Park residents to apply to fill the one open seat on the five-member Oak Park Municipal Advisory Council (MAC). The qualifications for serving are Oak Park residency and voter registration. Application forms are available on Supervisor Parks' county web page, can be sent electronically to interested residents upon request, and are also available at Supervisor Parks' office located at 625 West Hillcrest Drive in Thousand Oaks. The deadline for submitting an application is January 5, 2015. Supervisor Parks will interview applicants, and then nominate a candidate to the Board of Supervisors for appointment.

Oak Park MAC public meetings are generally held the fourth Tuesday of each month on the Oak Park High School campus. The MAC meetings deal with issues of concern to the Oak Park Community as well as providing recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on land use, public safety, and governmental issues.

There are no term limits for Oak Park MAC seats, and each term lasts for four years. For more information, please contact the office of Supervisor Linda Parks:  
Phone (805) 214-2510  
E-mail: [Linda.Parks@ventura.org](mailto:Linda.Parks@ventura.org)  
<http://www.ventura.org/linda-parks/district-2-supervisor-linda-parks>

## SCHOOL CALENDAR TO MAKE SHIFT

The Board of Education voted to change the school calendar starting with the next school year (2015-16). School will start on the second Tuesday of August and end on the Friday before Memorial Day weekend at the end of May. The entire week of Thanksgiving will also be off. This is being done in order for high school students to complete their first semester courses and have final exams prior to the winter vacation in December. The change will provide students with a true work-free winter break. The shifting of the school year will also benefit students taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses who take nationally administered exams in mid-May. 73% of our high school students are taking at least one AP course, most take several each year in grades 10-12. Additionally, the Board approved policy that will keep all breaks homework-free for K-8 students. These include Thanksgiving week, winter break, Presidents' Day 4-day weekend, and spring break.

## BY THE NUMBERS

For the Oak Park High School Class of 2014, we are proud to report the following:

- 97.5% of the Class of 2014 are attending college.
- 70.3% were admitted to a 4-year college or university – a new record.
- 63.7% are attending a 4-year program.
- Graduates are attending 92 different colleges this fall.

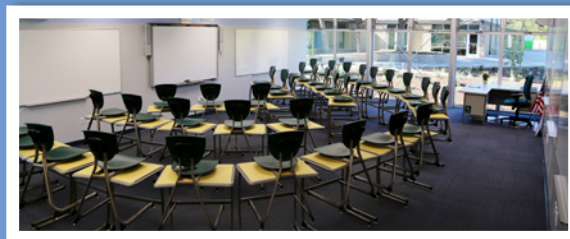
And this year looks to be another record-breaking year for the Class of 2015. As of November 30, Oak Park High School seniors have submitted over 2200 college applications – a new record.

## SAVING MONEY — SAVING THE ENVIRONMENT

As a National Green Ribbon School District, the first in California and one of only 14 in the nation, Oak Park USD works hard to model conservation. Electricity use was down 12% this past school year compared to 2008/09. Since then, the District has used Measure R bond funds to upgrade facilities making them more energy efficient. Cool roofs, computer controlled thermostats, new lighting, new heating and air conditioning systems, and more are resulting in a savings of more than \$60,000 a year. Of course, electrical costs keep rising so savings will increase year after year. This year we are installing a new solar patio at Oak Park High School that will provide 6,000 square feet of shade for students and produce 15% of the school's electricity. This should be completed in January.

Over the last two years we have reduced our water consumption by over 3 million gallons by modernizing our irrigation systems and installing weather-tracking systems. Note that OPUSD uses reclaimed or recycled water to irrigate our playgrounds and fields. The water comes to us from the Tapia Water Reclamation Facility located in Malibu Canyon. Purchasing this water helps them meet their EPA requirement of not discharging reclaimed water into Malibu Creek from April through November each year and saves millions of gallons of potable water that is in desperately short supply. School gardens are not irrigated with reclaimed water.

## NEW i-BUILDING AT OAK PARK HIGH SCHOOL



Hopefully you have seen our new classrooms that face Kanan Road and the Great Lawn at Oak Park High School. These are the first such classrooms in the nation, made from recycled ocean cargo containers. We were recently notified that the project has earned an award from the United States Green Building Council Central Coast Chapter and will likely win other awards. The buildings are comfortable and afford abundant natural light, which research has shown improves learning and student achievement. Here are some facts about the new GrowthPoint classrooms:

- Made from 85% reclaimed material
- Reduces landfill impact by 22-tons per classroom
- Relief at Port of LA from over-crowding and unnecessary land use with storing used containers.
- LEED Platinum attainable
- Achieve Net-Zero energy use easily with addition of solar panels because of highly efficient structures.
- R-values (insulation) 200% greater than CA requirements, exceeds Title 24 by 25%.
- HVAC system has SEER rating 46% above CA state standards.
- Cool roof technology reduces heat absorption by over 90%, reducing air conditioning electricity bills by 20%.
- Ductless HVAC system requires 50% less energy consumption and maintenance costs are significantly reduced by eliminating the need to maintain a network of ducting.
- Designed to withstand earthquakes, hurricanes, and tornados.
- Withstands 112-tons of compressive force and 17-tons of lateral force.
- 106 times stronger than building codes require.
- Resists weathering over 100 years.
- Interior wood walls systems resist damage and hold up to 250 lbs. at any point.
- Continuous door hinges eliminate failing standard hinges removing the need for repair and replacement.
- Inherent options to resist vandalism and increase security.
- Less than half the price of other green modular options classrooms.
- 25% faster to build than standard modular construction.
- 66% less expensive than most traditional school construction.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**GreenRibbonSchools**



## NOTES FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

I know this is a busy time of year but I hope you will take a moment to read some highlights about Oak Park USD from this fall in our SchoolWatch newsletter. Our enrollment is 4695, below what was expected this year but sufficient in terms of budget projections. We have begun a class size reduction program at the elementary schools. This year K classes have 24 students or less. Next year, K and 1 will have 24, etc., until all K-3 classes are at 24. The K-12 average class size is now down to 26.7. This is possible due to increasing revenues from the state and steady enrollment, which have also allowed us to add another counselor to Medea Creek Middle School, and provide a new K-5 physical education program where students receive 100 minutes a week of PE instruction from a credentialed specialist. Since 2007-08 there were no salary increases for employees. Last year a 3% raise was provided and this year a 5% increase was approved by the Board in November.

The District of Choice (DOC) program has not only sustained the school district during the state budget-cutting period 2007-2012 but allowed us to maintain reasonable class sizes and build new programs. Our music program at Oak Park High School has been greatly expanded and now sports a new marching band (with help from parent organizations and OPUSD), we offer more courses at MCMS and OPHS than ever before, including more AP course choices. This is certainly playing a part in more of our students being accepted into the colleges they desire to attend. All of our schools consistently rank in the top 1% in the nation. Newsweek magazine recently ranked Oak Park High School 19th in California and 137th in the nation out of 2,000 high schools in California and over 25,000 nationwide. We accepted a total of 280 District of Choice students this year and expect to accept less than 200 next year. We are beginning to see an increase in resident enrollment over the last two years, which, if this continues, will lower our DOC numbers.

To mitigate traffic in the community, OPUSD is helping to fund the Kanan Shuttle to keep it free. We provide campus supervision starting at 7:15 AM at OPHS, 7:30 AM at MCMS, and 7:45 at the elementary schools so parents can drop off children early, and have implemented numerous recommendations from county traffic studies. Start and dismissal times are staggered. I recall in the 1990's when I was principal of Oak Hills Elementary, we had a traffic problem. The problem was that the school was full, not with DOC students, but from children who lived in Oak Park and nearly all parents drove their children to school. So, we recognize that our DOC program adds to traffic in the area, but it may not be dramatically more than if our schools were full with resident students. Kanan Road is a busy thoroughfare. In addition to our schools, Las Virgenes School District has four schools along the way: Agoura High School, Willow, Sumac, and Mariposa elementary schools, serving about 3500 students. About 20% of the students who attend these schools live out of the area and the attendance boundaries for these schools are wide and require the use of Kanan Road.

This year our DOC program will bring in over \$6 million in funding after the expenses associated with educating these students. These revenues make ALL the difference in the quality of the educational program that our parents and community expect from their schools – helping to keep property values high and much sought after.

On behalf of the Board of Education and myself, please allow me to take this opportunity to wish you all a peaceful holiday season and a healthy and happy New Year.

Dr. Tony Knight  
Superintendent





## WELCOME NEW SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS



### Derek Ross

Derek Ross has been in the risk management industry for over 25 years and is President of Kulchin Ross Insurance Services, LLC. Derek provides custom tailored Disaster Prevention

Training, Sensitivity Training and Specialized Loss Control Programs to help his clients lower their risk ratio while improving their bottom line.

Derek is the current President of the Independent Brokers and Agents of the San Fernando Valley (IBA SFV) and is also a board member for the Independent Insurance Agents of California. Derek is also a dedicated community volunteer and is experienced with disaster preparedness training. He shares his expertise with several organizations, including Volunteer in Policing (V.I.P), Disaster Assistance Response Team (D.A.R.T), and the Oak Park Community Emergency Response Team (C.E.R.T.) In 2008, Oak Park constituents elected Derek as a member of the Oak Park Municipal Advisory Council (OP MAC) and served as the Chairman of that Council in 2011. Derek was also elected to the Oak Park Recreation and Park District Committee in 2010 and currently serves as its vice-chairman (Chairman, 2013). His dedication to the community lead him to co-author a book titled, Images of America- Oak Park. All the proceeds from that book have been donated to non-profit organizations in the community of Oak Park. In 2010 Derek founded and volunteer edits a community website titled [www.OakParkNow.com](http://www.OakParkNow.com)

Derek has been married to his wife Lauren for ten years. They have two children, Molli (5) and Elli (4). They moved to Oak Park in 2003 in order to secure the best education possible for their future children. Molli began her academic experience at Red Oak Elementary in August 2014. Derek has been committed to a healthy, fit lifestyle for all of his life. He was certified as a personal trainer in 2004 and competes in triathlons and other events throughout California. He is huge supporter of creative calisthenics and trains all over the country supporting the [www.barstarzz.com](http://www.barstarzz.com) organization. As an early riser, Derek can be found at Indian Springs Park most mornings playing around on the bars, just as he did as a kid.



### Denise Helfstein

Denise has been a resident of Oak Park for 11 years. She is currently serving in her second year as the PTA president at Brookside Elementary School and has served in a variety of other volunteer positions

at Brookside. Denise holds a B.A. in political science from the University of California at San Diego and a J.D. from the University of San Francisco and is a member of the State Bar of California. Her area of law specialization is public sector/education law. Denise and her husband Todd are the parents of two children attending Brookside. Denise feels "privileged that her children attend school in a district that focuses not only on academics, but on the 'whole child' and the larger world around them."



## MEET OUR NEW SCIENCE SPECIALIST

Our Education Foundation funds our District Science Specialist who provides many enrichment opportunities for students at all levels. Debbie Hammill comes to Oak Park USD with 15 years of teaching experience and 10 years of STEM experience working as a chemist. She has taught many subjects such as chemistry, AP chemistry, physics, earth science, biology, integrated science and math. As a chemist she worked in an analytical laboratory that was certified to test drinking water, wastewater and soil for the California and Federal Environmental Protection

Agencies. Part of her job would be to would work with engineers to design a testing protocol for Superfund clean up sites similar to the Santa Susana site here in Ventura County. She feels that her concern about the environment and experience as a chemist was part of her success as a teacher. She focused her lessons on real world examples that engaged her students with real world application. She is excited to be involved in the implementation Next Generation Science Standards for Oak Park USD. These standards will ensure that science teaching is relevant and experiential for students, which will allow for the most optimal and engaging learning environment.

## DON'T MISS OAK PARK'S SUPER SATURDAY!

OPUSD's 4th Annual SUPER SATURDAY, a Sustainability Showcase and Recycling Drive will be Saturday, January 31st. Discover what the Friends of Oak Park Schools' sponsored "Idea to Impact" program is about when you hear over 20 OPHS and MCMS student groups present information about energy and the environment. Other highlights include:

- Armstrong Garden Center: organic gardening workshop at 11 a.m.
- Plug In America: test drives of the newest electric cars
- Live Animals: tide pool table, live bird exhibit, and reptile, arachnid and rainforest animals to see and touch!
- Sustainable art contest open to all OPUSD students
- "Growing for Good" school gardens veggie sale and contest
- Gourmet, healthy lunch for purchase from an earth-friendly food truck

Activities are on OPHS's great lawn from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

## BRING US YOUR RECYCLABLES!

Help fund district-wide environmental education by dropping off the following from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. in the parking lot near OPHS's Pavilion:

- Used electrics and electronics (anything with a plug) and batteries (sorry no light bulbs)
- Used clothing and textiles, including shoes, bags, and rugs
- Unwanted prescription and over-the-counter medications
- Eyeglasses
- On-site document shredding (first 5 boxes per car free, \$5/box thereafter)

**WHY BOTHER RECYCLING?** It is important these items are properly and responsibly recycled. If they end up in landfills, they contribute to groundwater and soil pollution. Recycling of electronic items helps save natural resources and mining for rare materials in sensitive areas. Medications flushed down the drain cannot be fully filtered out during wastewater treatment and the effluent ends up affecting fish and wildlife. If tossed in the trash, medicines end up leaching into groundwater and soil.

**SUPER SATURDAY is OPEN TO YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE.**

More activities coming! Check out the latest at:  
<http://www.oakparkusd.org/supersaturday>

## ITEMS YOU CAN BRING TO SCHOOLS TO RECYCLE EVERY DAY

### FLAG RECYCLING

Do you have a worn out American flag that is ready to be retired? You can't throw it away because that is considered disrespectful and burning flags is no longer considered environmentally sound nor safe due to the fumes created from new materials used to make them. We are teaming with a company, American Flags Express, that will recycle the flags into new ones. Did you know that recycling American flags has been a tradition that dates back to the Revolution? Americans used to re-sew and re-make flags because the material was expensive and not always readily available. You may bring your worn out flags to any of our schools. The company charges \$5 per flag, which we would appreciate you including with your flag, but this is not required.

### CLOTHING RECYCLING

Please drop off your clothing, shoes, accessories, sheets, and all textiles in the USAgain bins located at all of the schools. Your donation supports our school gardens and other environmental projects like Earth Week and the Sustainability Fair. The items are REpurposed REsold or REcycled. 80% of these items end up in landfills each year, which is a terrible waste considering they take resources to make and many people are in need of them.

### INK CARTRIDGES, BATTERIES AND SMALL ELECTRONICS RECYCLING

Each school has a bin in the office to collect ink cartridges, cell phones, digital cameras, and any small electronics. You may also deposit household batteries but they MUST BE IN A ZIPLOC BAG. Please no appliances and no light bulbs. Bring your larger items – TV's, computers, anything with a plug, to the Super Saturday event for recycling.



## FALL TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

By Enoch Kwok, Director of Technology

Over the summer, OPUSD made tremendous progress in re-building its technology infrastructure in order to support a shift toward more student centered computing and to enhance campus security and communications.

After rewiring every school campus with the latest generations of network cabling, the district was able to deploy a new wireless network capable of servicing a student centered mobile computing learning environment. This new wireless network was designed to be able to handle the demands of a pervasive 1-to-1 mobile computing environment consisting of iPads, laptops, and Chromebooks.

The network cabling project also allowed the district to install two additional systems to enhance student safety and district communications. Every campus is now protected by a video surveillance system that can monitor outdoor activities around the campus during school and after hours. The district also installed a new VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) telephone system which allows the entire district to finally be on a single unified phone system across campuses and provides voicemail boxes for all district staff including teachers.

The district took the opportunity this summer to begin refreshing its oldest computers which date back to

2006. 180 new desktop and laptop computers were purchased to replace the first set of computers purchased through the C6 bond measure, and another 120 iPads were acquired so that the district could begin expanding the deployment of iPad learning centers and carts to more teachers. A final lot of SMARTboard interactive whiteboards was purchased to enable every classroom in the district to be outfitted with this key 21st Century Classroom technology.

To ensure all this technology is utilized effectively, the district also hired an instructional technology specialist, whose sole function is to work with teachers in their classrooms to implement technology infused lessons. This Teacher on Special Assignment helps teachers with designing and delivering iPad powered lessons, Google Apps For Education activities, or better use of the SMARTboards and related technologies to enhance student learning.

With a solid infrastructure foundation being laid both in hardware and in teacher training, the district looks forward to increased student empowerment and engagement as it moves toward a more student centered learning and computing environment. This focus on technology integration will also serve to prepare students to succeed in the Common Core curriculum and assessment regime that California has begun to implement.

## 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.

## OAK PARK HIGH PARTNERS IN GRANT TO PROVIDE CAREER PATHWAYS

Oak Park High School was recently awarded a \$300,000 California Pathways Trust Grant over three years to develop career pathways in Design, Visual and Media Arts, Software and Systems Development, and Engineering Design. The high school has partnered with the Ventura County Office of Education as part of the VC Innovates Program to further the development of Career and Technical Education in high school, community colleges and universities.

VC Innovates is a collaborative endeavor, bringing together educators, business and industry, and community partners to apply innovative approaches to the education experience and prepare future workers and leaders in the workforce.

The VC Innovates project provides for the construction of aligned and articulated curriculum from high school through community college in 62 career pathways in Ventura County. The grant provides for teacher training as they develop rigorous and relevant career education curriculum, secure work-based learning opportunities for all students, and create opportunities for students to work on an industry-based project in every course. VC Innovates also seeks to partner with employers to collaboratively address soft-skills and technical skills shortages in high growth industries and occupations throughout the region.

The grant also provides for the purchase of supplies and materials to bring course technologies up to industry standard so our students gain the kinds of skills used in the workplace.



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### Our Partners include:

Ventura County Community College District  
Ventura College  
Oxnard College  
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Fillmore Unified School District  
Santa Paula Unified School District  
Ventura Unified School District  
Ojai Unified School District  
Workforce Investment Board Ventura County

OPHS is also in the process of applying for a second round of grants for pathways in Biotech, Construction Management, and Business. Our partners in the second round are CSUN, Valley College, Glendale USD, Monroe Charter School, and Simi High.