

The Holy Optimist

VOL. VI

JOHN H. FRANCIS POLYTECHNIC HIGH SCHOOL

DECEMBER 2006

Sparks Still Fly For Toy Drive More than 40 years of history and the tradition continues.

By Michelle Gonzalez & Meri Sarkisyan
Optimist Staff Writers

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Brian Le Clair and his band of Leadership elves, Poly had another record year of fundraising with its annual toy drive.

"This is a fight against sadness," commented Le Clair, having done the toy drive for eleven years at Poly. Last year leadership raised over \$27,000 and is striving to raise \$30,000 this year.

When asked what is needed to plan a toy drive, Le Clair said, "Patience, energy, and more patience."

To fundraise for the toy drive, leadership has raffled a letterman jacket, sold roses, churros, tamales, and funnel cakes. "The toy drive takes months of planning, months and months," said Le Clair, "and it's still being planned."

Poly's leadership has been planning and organizing for the toy drive since last January with the help of Kitt Heilbron, C-track sponsor of leadership. Every year after fundraising

is over Leadership takes a day out of their busy schedule and takes a trip to KB Toys to purchase the large amount of toys. "Shopping doesn't take that long but purchasing does," said Le Clair.

"I get the satisfaction of helping someone else in need, I'm also learning to appreciate what I have more," said former Leadership member Melissa Davila.

"It's exciting that every day that passes by, it's more that we are contributing to the tradition," said Julie Montes.

The toy drive first began when athletic director Al Richards' son became ill and had to be taken to a hospital. Richards quickly found out how many children would go without presents during the holidays, and came up with the idea of fundraising to give toys to children. Even though the first fundraiser wasn't as successful as it is now, it has become a tradition for Poly, and so many children will not go without a toy during the holidays.

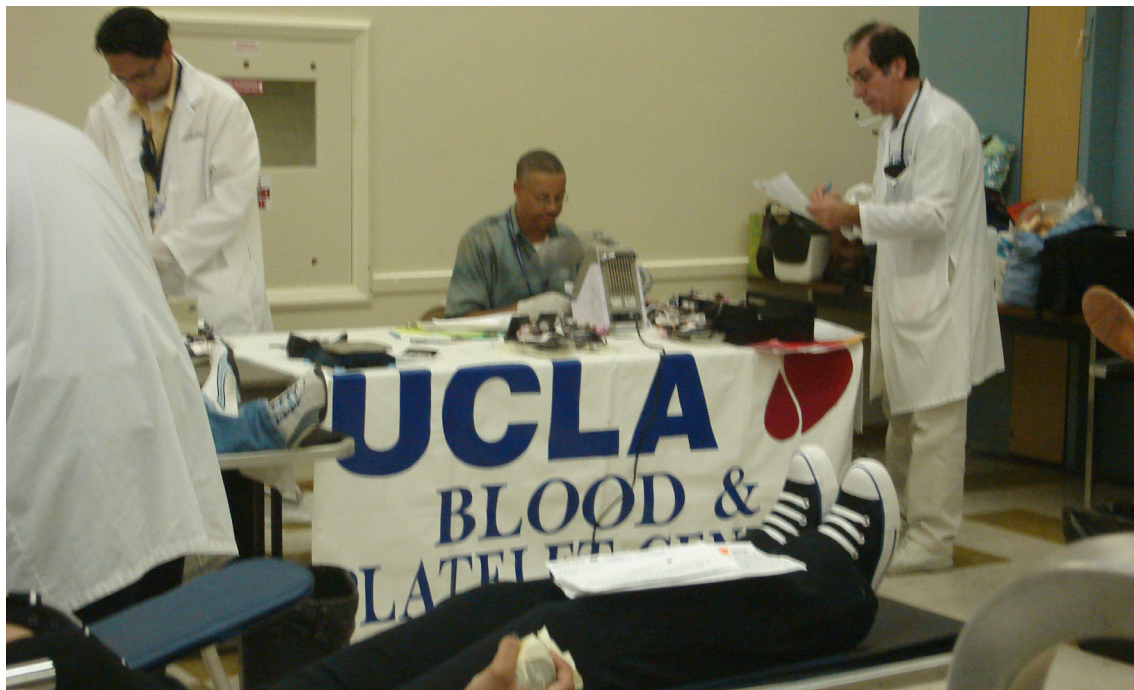


Photo By Ana Martinez

BLOOD RUSH: UCLA sponsors a blood drive at Poly, while Poly Parrots give it their all.

Everyone Wins At Poly's Blood Drive

Parrots Give Even When It Hurts A Little.

By Adrienne Powdrill
Optimist Staff Writer

UCLA's nurses moved from one stretcher to another monitoring Poly students, drip by drip as the cafetorium filled with excited blood donors. The focused recipient for Poly's recent blood drive November was Alyssa Gomez, a sophomore at Granada Hills High School, who was diagnosed with leukemia in the fall of 2004.

Leukemia is a form of cancer where the bone marrow absorbs blood cells and requires frequent transfusions of whole blood and platelets. The blood drive continued the competi-

tion with North Hollywood to see who could donate the most blood.

Even though Poly's last blood drive did not have as many volunteer blood donors, this time over 200 students volunteered and 161 were eligible to donate blood. The reason some volunteers could not donate was because of their medical history, recent travel, and iron deficiency.

Brian Le Clair, Leadership Sponsor, said this blood drive exceeded his expectations. The student body's goal was to get 136 pints of blood but Poly accumulated 161 pints, which Le Clair wasn't expecting until the next blood drive. From the past two blood drives, Poly has beat North Hollywood with a combined total of 476 pints to North Hollywood's

total of 450. "You swept the floor with North Hollywood," said Francisco Garces a representative from UCLA medical center.

Leadership member, Jesus Aceves, who was in charge of the November blood drive says, "For every pint of blood we can help four people." The blood donations won't just go to Alyssa Gomez, but also to John Paul Quintero, the little boy who was Poly's named recipient from the last blood drive as well as other people in need of blood in the Los Angeles area. Most students said they wanted to help someone in need and help save a life when asked what was their personal reason for donating. Once again Poly parrots showed their generous and caring side.



Photo By Efrain Rodriguez

GRINCH FREE-ZONE: Parrots' generosity shows here on the meter keeping track of money raised.

Sophomores Scope out Options

By Jennifer Rivera
Optimist Staff Writer

The 10th Grade Center held an SLC Interest Fair for sophomores on Friday, December 1 and December 8, to give them a chance to explore different career interests and choose a Small Learning community for their junior year.

The first fair included HABIL (Hospitality, Agriculture, Business and Industrial Technologies) and EHS (Education and Human Services).

Students went from station to station, exploring different career options.

Among the choices represented were: Woodbury University, the Police Dept., the Fire Dept., U.S. Marines, Forest Service, Careers with Children and Woodshop.

Mr. Lamos, woodshop teacher gave students an opportunity to try out equipment and see what woodshop was all about, while Mr. Colon's Floriculture class showed off their talent creating flower

[SLC continued on Page 2]

Planting the Seeds of Life

By Leah Tanner
Optimist Staff Writer

The Philosophy is to learn and sustain the program.

Working with plants, studying the biological pro-

cesses of soil, and creating beautiful floral arrangements has been Hector Colon's beat for the past seven years since he took over Poly's agricultural program. Joining the Poly faculty in 1988,

Mr. Colon has been teaching students with a hands on approach about the biology of plants, the soil they need to grow and flourish, along with landscaping design and most recently floral arrangements.

"We try to concentrate on the business aspect of floral design," Colon said. "I want the students to learn how to make as many different designs as possible in the time allowed. I want the students to be able to identify the different types of flowers used in floral design and how they are priced."

The students participate in creating the arrangements and they are sold to Poly students and faculty. The proceeds are returned back to the class

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Photo By Leah Tanner

Cornucopia: Created by Hector Colon's class.

THE POLY OPTIMIST

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Jose Peralta

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Jennifer Rivera

DESIGN EDITOR
Jose Peralta

FRONT PAGE
Writers: Michelle Gonzalez, Adrienne Powdrill, Jennifer Rivera, Meri Sarkisyan

EDITORIAL
EDITOR: Jennifer Rivera
Writers: Evelyn Lemus, Leah Tanner, Aries Vega

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PHOTO EDITOR
Efrain Rodriguez

CARTOONIST
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SPECIAL EDITOR
John Blau

OPTIMIST ADVISER
Ethel Matlen

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The Poly Optimist adheres to the responsibility of a Free Student Press. It serves as a voice for the student body and the community. This newspaper accepts all the responsibilities inherent in being a free press. The Optimist staff strives to follow the Code of Ethics for the Society of Professional Journalists. **Editorials are the opinion of individual staff writers, and not presented as news facts.**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the Editor are accepted and encouraged for topics relevant to our readers. Letters to be submitted must be typed or neatly printed in ink and must have the signature of the writer. Editors reserve the right to determine which issue the letter will be published in, and the right to edit the letter for grammar, length, and structure.

Correction Errors: In the case of errors, a written correction will be made in the following issue of the newspaper.

Duffy Lays it on the Line for Poly Teachers

By Leah Tanner
Optimist Staff Writer

UTLA President A.J. Duffy visited Poly this past month with change on his mind.

Duffy was elected president last February with a goal to raise teachers' salaries by 9%; the same figure he proclaimed while talking to Poly teachers. A

1% raise for all employees costs \$40 million. Therefore a 9% raise will run the district \$360 million.

"We want our teachers to be paid in the top quartile of the country. Right now we are in the bottom," said Duffy.

Duffy explained that the teachers' union should be striving for 14% but the requested 9% would be "attainable" if teachers work together and fight for it.

"With 40 teachers behind me, I can't do anything. With 48,000 behind me, there isn't anything I can't do," Duffy promised.

He asked for teachers' sup-

port with red shirt Tuesdays, and leaving school when teachers are supposed to and participating in the strike vote that will be taking place in February.

"We need to put you in the streets to take action," Duffy said, "...No union has ever gotten what the members deserve without putting those members in the street... We need to be organized. We need to have strength."

He went on to quote the "Godfather" when addressing those that would be afraid to strike, "It's not personal, it's business."

A teachers' strike could be very possible if teachers vote in its favor this February. If no agreement can be reached for a new contract, than teachers would be asked to participate in stop-work actions; this would include not staying beyond their contractual time and would result in the elimination of many after-school activities for students, a thing most teachers would find very difficult to do.



Letters to the Editor

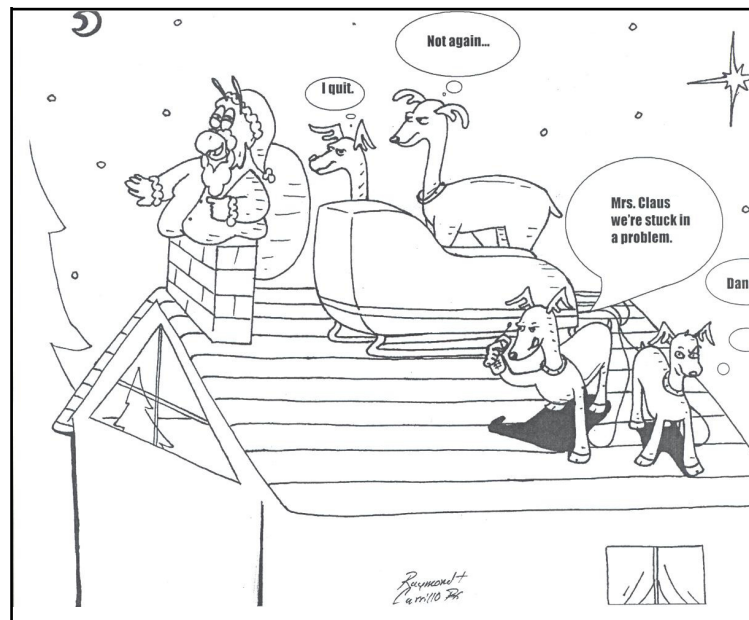
To Poly Optimist,

You hit a homerun! Congratulations on a first class effort in producing today's Poly Optimist newspaper. Frankly, it looked as good or better than many community newspapers that you purchase around town. The stories were relevant, timely and well written. The aesthetics were appealing, and looked very much like a professional newspaper. Your photos were clear and sharp. This is clearly the result of your caring approach, your talent and teamwork.

I was also editor of my high school newspaper so I understand the time commitment and hard work that it takes to produce a publication. To be successful, I know that you must manage many moving parts behind the scenes. Mission accomplished. You made it all come together in a very impressive way.

Your hard work was definitely noticed and appreciated by this teacher and every students in my class! We look forward to your next edition.

- Barry Stockhamer
Teacher



Choosing the Marines as a Career

By Aries Vega
Optimist Staff Writer

At Poly's first Small Learning Community Career Fair, the United States Marine Corps was well represented by Staff Sgt. Olivares and Sgt. Rincon. While some might consider Marine recruitment inappropriate for school campuses, the military is a career choice, that can help students decide the actual path they want to take in life. The presentation included an overview of all the different fields the military has to offer. Military recruiters visit Poly's campus once a month to talk to students about professions available through the military. To those who think the military is an option only open to students who are not college bound, Sgt. Rincon said: "That's a huge misconception; we are looking for people with good grades, clean records, and people who have motivation." There are those who see the military as a choice only for those who do not have decent grades and

cannot get into a good college. However, for Sgt. Rincon personally, bad grades weren't the issue; he had good grades in high school and many options. "While having many doors opened to me, when I sat down with a recruiter, I just knew my path and it was in the Marines," Rincon said. The job of a recruiter is to promote the military and provide options. When and if, the student wants to join, the recruiter's job is to help the student prepare for a series of steps, the first of which is boot camp. Sgt. Rincon was asked: Why do you think young men join the military? "Lots of reasons," he said, "but perhaps mostly everyone wants to feel a part of something with honor and pride." He said the reason he joined the military was because he wanted to learn self-discipline, go through the military experience, and feel accomplished in something. They can train for future careers when they leave military service.



SERGEANTS ATTEND POLY: Sgt. Olivares (left) and Sgt. Rincon representing the Marine Corp. at the SLC Fair held in the Cafetorium.

[SLC continued from Page 1]

arrangements.

Students moved from station to station listening to teachers and representatives from the different learning communities, to consider which would suit them best. Interactive presentations showed students possible careers they could pursue and the learning communities will give them an insight into the job experience.

The following Friday had representatives from the S.L.C., FAME (Fine Arts, Media and Entertainment) and SPORT/EHS (Sports Program Opportunities and

Recreational Training/ Education and Human Services).

Students interested in sports had the chance to look at Athletic Training, Nutrition, Physiology, Sports Medicine.

FAME was represented by teachers and their students. Ms. Nield displayed artwork from her Art History class. Poly's Animation class demonstrated their artistic talents. Mr. Loya showed sophomores his AP Art class. Ms. Matlen represented Journalism with The Poly Optimist.

SLC coordinator Ms. Cheryl Cohen-Thompson said, "This is all for them to make a good choice."

Correction:

The Optimist mistakenly gave Efrain Rodriguez photo credit in the story "Homecoming 2006." Proper credit is to Leah Arjona. The Optimist regrets the error.

Teens in Crisis

Help is just a phone call away.

By Jennifer Miranda
Optimist Staff Writer

Teens who need help with any problem or to make a decision can pick up the phone and speak with someone his or her own age who is trained to deal with the unexpected at any time. There are times in a teen's life, when they feel alone, scared, confused, or really depressed. Help is just a phone call away.

You may believe you are the only one who has encountered that particular dilemma. The truth however is that everyone goes through tough times in life. The TEEN LINE is a teen-to-teen help line, run by teens for teens. Its mission is to help teens address their problems through a confidential peer hotline and community outreach program.

Being a teen can be diffi-

cult. There is so much going on in and around your life that, at times, it can get overwhelming. When you feel that life has you on the ropes and you need somewhere to turn try the TEEN LINE. Get counseling over the phone when you need it most.

"No problem is too big or too small.... We're here to help! Call us..." is the motto used by the TEEN LINE—any problems from abuse, AIDS, alcoholism, depression, divorce, drugs, homelessness, pregnancy, sexuality, and even suicide are dealt with by the Teen Line.

The TEEN LINE's staff carefully select approximately eighty teenagers a year for hotline and outreach training. High school volunteers are trained to help teen callers with any kind of problem. They complete a sixty-hour training program practicing listening and communication techniques.

Topics discussed include crisis intervention, peer pres-

sure, school problems, sexuality, addictions, abuse, self-destructive and life threatening behaviors.

We urge you to call the TEEN LINE before you take any action. The Teen Line is a toll-free 800 number, and it will not show up on your phone bill, in case you are concerned this call may be revealed to your parents. The line is open from 6pm to 10pm PST every night.

Since the TEEN LINE is staffed by trained teenagers, teen counselors are only available during evening hours. However, if anyone calls and needs to speak to someone right away, the call will be transferred to the Suicide Prevention Service.

Just knowing that there is someone out there who will listen to any problem is reassuring. Next time you have any issues with your teenage life don't forget the number... (800)TLC-TEEN [(800)852-8336] for more information visit their website at www.teenonline.org.

Sharing the Wealth

Everyone does it, but does that mean it's right?

By Rimon Elkotbeid
Optimist Staff Writer

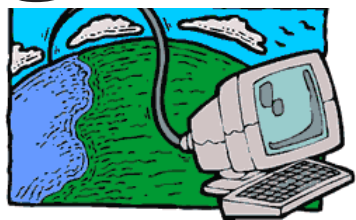
Everyone knows that EVERYONE (or almost everyone) downloads music and other files online for free.

We download all the music we like, all the movies we want, all the pictures we see, all the games we play and all the programs we use, and all of this, absolutely for free. And the best thing of all, we call this "sharing."

Internet file sharing has grown since the times of the infamous Napster, which to most people was the start of it all. There are all sorts of mediums and programs now that anyone can download for free, to get anything for free. Whether it is Limewire, Bearshare, or Kazaa, all these programs run on the user's willingness to share the content they bought and put on their computer.

All that has to happen is for one person to buy the music, take the picture, or record the movie, put it on their computer and share it with everyone else through these P2P (peer-to-peer) sharing programs.

Today's downloading has grown even simpler thanks



to websites like Youtube and Myspace. These websites allow their members to upload content like music and movies onto their servers to share with everyone else for free. This sharing ability is one of the biggest factors contributing to the success of such sites.

But is downloading music, movies, and programs legal? Is it wrong to take someone else's hard work without paying for it?

File sharing of copyrighted work is illegal, and is punishable by law. Problem is so many people are doing it, that no one really cares, though billions of dollars are lost, or in most people's perspective, saved.

Artists and movie directors make money from their creations, lots of it. But even so, people are expected to pay for it.

Everyone with a drop of conscience thinks about this, but of most dismisses it. It is so easy, and you never hear of anyone being caught. We use all sorts of justifications when we download material, such as "the creator already has a

lot of money," or "one extra download won't matter."

Copying another person's creative work without paying for it is stealing. It also violates copyright laws, making it a crime.

There may not be a way of abolishing illegal downloading, because if one medium is shut down, another will rise and the cycle of "good will" will continue.

[Colon cont. from Page 1]

order to buy more flowers and other needed materials.

At present, the program runs while Mr. Colon is on track, which is B Track. The different themes that are available for purchase are usually based on the Holidays occurring during his on-track time such as Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Mr. Colon went to Alemany High School, Pierce College and graduated from California State University Northridge. After college, Colon joined the Peace Corps, a program provided by the U.S. government that allows people to go to other countries and help teach them skills they may not otherwise learn, which benefits their countries over the long term. He was stationed in Ulul, Micronesia, in Polynesia, for 2 ½ years, an island that is 2 miles long

Top Gifts for 2006



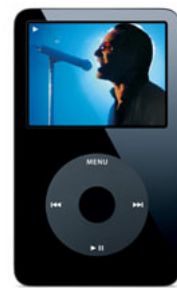
1) Money



2) Car



3) Shoes



4) I-Pod



5) Cell Phone

GIFTS GALORE: Most Wanted gifts of 2006

Most Wanted Gifts

Poly Students choose their top ten gifts.

By Leah Tanner
Optimist Staff Writer

The Holidays are coming and with them the air of gift giving and receiving. The Optimist did an informal survey of Poly students and asked them to share their wish list. When asked what they would like to be given, Poly students described an array of gifts that ranged anywhere from Jack Sparrow action figures to the newly created PS3 that hit the shelves just a few weeks ago.

The number one gift requested by 20% of students was—you guessed it—money. The second choice however constituted the area of "gift" a tad more. This was the automobile, which varied from a pick up to a BMW. Interestingly enough, the category of shoes was not far behind in its popularity, but vague in

description. After footwear, several technological devices were suggested such as iPods, cell phones and lap tops: an assortment that tied for fourth. Digital Cameras came in next followed by merchandise from the virtual world such as the new PlayStation 3 and Nintendo Wii Videogame players. The final gift that barely made the list was the XBOX 360. The fact that these games found themselves at the bottom three may be a surprise to some videogame players but some comfort may be found in that they beat out the often-requested Ugg Boots, even if by only a few votes.

More profound gift requests that were shared included that of wisdom and time, "The Wedding Singer" DVD and a new girlfriend. The Optimist staff extends to everyone their best wishes for this Holiday Season, and may everyone receive their gift of choice.

and a ½ mile wide where he taught English and P.E. Mr. Colon explained that the experience of the Peace Corps should not be confused with that of the military. Peace Corps members are sent to foreign countries on their own to help. Colon found he was the only American on this tiny, remote island and had to learn the language with the help of natives, even though few natives spoke English.

He compared the experience to "permanent camping." There was no electricity or running water, he often caught fish for meals and he lived in a hut. Out of the destinations offered which were Korea and Africa, Colon chose Micronesia because the island sounded like a beautiful place to spend two years. He soon found out, however, that it was not Hawaii. The minute he got off the boat he found himself the target of hundreds of flies and

mosquitoes. "It was really hard getting used to it," said Colon.

Many Peace Corps volunteers quit, but that wasn't an option for him. After six months he had become accustomed to the life of a Micronesian. He continued to teach until Cholera broke out. Cholera is a disease caused by eating food that has traces of feces on it, spread by people who did not wash their hands after using the bathroom. With no running water, this came with the territory.

The school was closed while the disease was rampant. Colon was unable to teach. Since the quarantine might hold up for another year, he decided to go back to America.

After coming home to Los Angeles, he started teaching at Saint Therese Elementary School and Byrd Middle School, before coming to Poly.

Varsity Takes Alums to School

“Oldschool” struggles to answer Parrot’s 23-point lead at the end of the first half in annual Alumni game.

By Juan Carlos Sanchez
Optimist Staff Writer

Big time offense in first half ignites Poly and sets up the 108-82 victory for Poly’s 2006-2007 basketball team over the alumni.

Fifteen alumni entered “The Cage,” Poly’s basketball gym, hoping to defeat the Poly Parrots. Poly basketball team was prompt to show off their off-season workout regimen in Fridays contest.

Poly’s leading scorer DJ Gay put up 30 points of the 108 for the nights scoring. Michael Rojas and Mauricio Gonzalez held their own with

a combined total of 37 points.

Poly’s offense entered half-time with a comfortable lead of 23 points, 49-26. At half time the home crowd was entertained with a performance by the award winning Drill Team, who continue to perform brilliantly.

After being down by 23 points, the 15 grads got up to speed with a dramatically improved 56-point second half performance. But the varsity squad had too much firepower for the older guys, who lost by 26.

After the victory of his Varsity squad, Coach Katz reflected on the alumni game. “It was wonderful to see all the alumni participate in the game. It shows that Poly Basketball has made a lasting impression on everyone who has played basketball at Poly.”



Photo by Coach Bonino

Focused: Players watching anxiously awaiting the ball.

9th In a Row for the Parrot Runners

Poly’s Cross Country team takes the League title for the ninth season in a row advancing to the City Section Finals.

By Juan Carlos Sanchez
Optimist Staff Writer

This year Cross Country did not begin smoothly. After a brief absence from the field coach Mario Rivera returned this year to help our Parrot runners began their league title run.

The 2006 Cross Country team started with the return of only one varsity veteran. Six new girls joined the varsity Cross Country team this year, however, this did not affect their performance in tough competitions.

Competing against North Hollywood, Canoga, and Verdugo High Schools as the underdog, Poly defeated the Huskies, Hunters, and the Dons

runners for their 9th straight league title. With Rivera’s training and support both the girls and boys teams advanced to the city finals.

First year runner Jasmyne Maroon and senior Roger Gadea carried their exceptional teams on their backs.

As a first year runner Maroon advanced to the city semi-finals but came up just short of qualifying for the next competition. Roger Gadea was ranked 7th in the Sunset Six Varsity league. Colleges around the state have shown interest in Gadea for his speed, and prospects for scholarships are great.

“The team is very close and it’s a family environment,”

“Coach Red” Remembered

Friends and family pay tribute to the late Coach Red.

By Ana Martinez
Optimist Staff Writer

Past and present members of Poly’s football teams joined family, friends and school members to pay their last respects to a popular member of Poly’s football coaching staff, John “Red” Shedden. At least eighty players attended the service at the Forest Lawn Cemetery on Friday November 11, 2006, dressed in khaki pants and red chucks, Red’s favorite attire, to show their respect to the popular coach.

On November 4, 2006, “Coach Red” died at the age of 25, in a head-on collision at the corner of Roscoe and Teesdale next to the Grace Community Church, within a couple of miles of Poly. Shedden, a Poly alumnus, graduated in 2000, and played football his junior and senior year, later returning to help on the coaching staff as a coach for receivers.

Coach Red was well known for his outgoing personality and red hair, which contributed to his nickname “Red.” He always found a way to make you laugh even when you were down,” said Coach Ben a member of Poly’s coaching staff. Not only did Coach Red teach his players how to play football, he also helped them in their personal life. “He taught me to make the best of everything,” said Joshua Aylia, a former student of Coach Red.

Coach Ben added, “He was



Photo Provided By Ben Rosenthal

Remembered: Coach Red.

also the type of person that if you needed him he would drop everything to help you.”

Both the students and coaching staff agree that Coach Red was a very dedicated person inside and outside the game. Aylia said that when Coach Red played for Poly he even played a game with broken ribs.

Coach Ben said the outpouring of support by the players demonstrates how the team put in practice the values Coach Peralta has taught over the years to his team. Ben said “I feel proud because for all the years that Coach Peralta has been coaching he has always preached about being a family—this showed that it was really true.” With the help of Brian J. LeClair, leadership sponsor, the football players showed their family spirit by raising \$1,847 for the funeral expenses.

Coach Ben said, Coach Red was a very inspirational person for the players. At their last game the players said his death motivated them to win the last game of the season against Van Nuys 24-20

control.” Coach Rivera said.

Leadership is a very important aspect in becoming a great team and this year’s Cross Country squad had very strong leadership in seniors Adrian Sigala, Angie Montes, Angel Rodriguez, and Erika Flores.

“I did not have to be there all the time. They had it under

control.” Coach Rivera said.

Rivera is looking forward to next season and is ready to take the team further then the city finals next year. The team was well known years ago, now Rivera hopes to bring that recognition back to Poly.

Rivera’s thoughts for the next year are to “rebuild the track program at Poly.”



Photo By Efrain Rodriguez

At Ease: Mr. Rivera with his cross-country team.

2007 Poly Winter Season

Boys Varsity/JV Basketball

Chatsworth	Home	Dec.15
Granada	Home	Jan.5
Canoga	Home	Jan.10
Van Nuys	Home	Jan.12
Grant	Away	Jan.17
Verdugo	Away	Jan.19
N.Hollywood	Away	Jan.24
Canoga	Away	Jan.26
Grant	Home	Feb.2
N.Hollywood	Home	Feb.9

Girls Varsity/JV Basketball

San Fernando	Away	Dec.13
Van Nuys	Away	Jan.12
Grant	Home	Jan.17
Verdugo	Home	Jan.19
N.Hollywood	Home	Jan.24
Canoga	Home	Jan.26
Van Nuys	Home	Jan.31
Grant	Away	Feb.2
Verdugo	Away	Feb.7
N.Hollywood	Away	Feb.9

Boys Varsity/JV Soccer

San Fernando	Home	Dec.15
Canoga	Away	Jan.10
Van Nuys	Away	Jan.12
Grant	Home	Jan.17
Verdugo	Home	Jan.19
N.Hollywood	Home	Jan.24
Canoga	Home	Jan.26
Grant	Away	Feb.2
Verdugo	Away	Feb.7
N.Hollywood	Away	Feb.9

Girls Varsity/JV Soccer

San Fernando	Away	Jan.5
Canoga	Home	Jan.10
Van Nuys	Away	Jan.12
Grant	Away	Jan.17
N.Hollywood	Away	Jan.24
Canoga	Away	Jan.26
Van Nuys	Home	Jan.31
Grant	Home	Feb.2
Verdugo	Home	Feb.7
N.Hollywood	Home	Feb.9