

The Holy Optimist

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School

VOL. VI

12431 ROSCOE BLVD. SUN VALLEY, CALIFORNIA, 91352

DECEMBER 2007

National Scholar, Local Student

High scores on AP exams have placed this young man among the national elite.

By Adrian Rayos
Staff Writer

Throughout his life Perry Nga has ventured through the world of academics on overdrive and has surpassed the average school pointdexter.

He's landed himself in a seat that distinguishes him not just locally, but nationally as a real smarty pants. Just this past spring the annual Advanced Placement test was administered.

Perry's score out did most of the children in the nation and is now acknowledged by the CollegeBoard as a National Scholar. Including Perry, Juan Fuentes and German Polanco are scholars with distinction according to the CollegeBoard.

Now he has the nation's most prestigious colleges requesting his attendance in their starting semesters.

Everyday he find himself in the midst of what he does and likes best, his schoolwork. When asked what drives him to do so well in his schooling, he replies that his mother is the source. To him and the rest of his siblings, his brother Peter Nga a scholar of substantial significance as well, strong ideas of work ethic and determination were instilled by his now very proud mother.



Photo by Michael Obando

SCHOLAR: Senior Perry Nga strives for academic excellence.

Heroes in Training

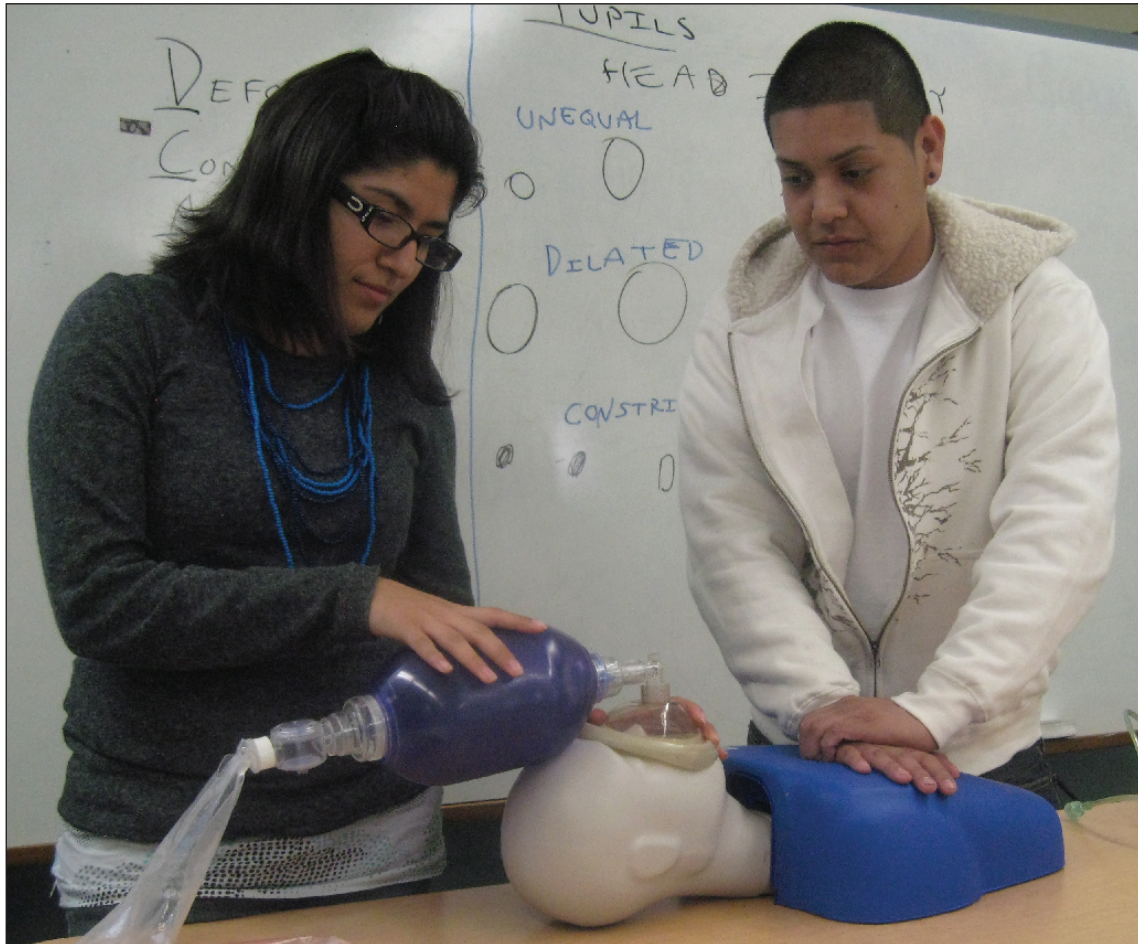


Photo by Jose Perez

LEARNING HOW TO SAVE LIVES: Tirzah Castillo and Roger Torres perform CPR techniques on a human dummy in the First Responders class.

By Christian Banuelos
& Jennifer Miranda
Staff Writers

You're in your third period, when all of the sudden, the student beside you, drops to the ground, and appears to be unconscious. Do you know what to do next? Accidents like this occur on an everyday basis. Fortunately, Poly's Regional Occupational Program [ROP]

offers a class called, First Responder. The class is offered to all students in any small learning community [SLC].

The class is taught by a Jeremy Sonenschein a new teacher to Poly. Sonenschein is also an assistant professor at Valley College, and works for an ambulance company. Sonenschein has a Masters in Education and Bachelors in Medicine. Sonenschein said,

"I set high standards for myself, and my students as well."

Sonenschein trains students to be First Responders. A First Responder is someone who knows what to do in case of an emergency, if there are no emergency personal available.

"The class is a good class to take even if you don't want

[*Heroes continued on Page 4*]

Choosing the Right Gift

By Jennifer Miranda
Staff Writer

The Holidays are around the corner, and many of us haven't bought any gifts. Perhaps it is because we are confused on what to buy.

Luckily, The Optimist can help. The Optimist created an informal survey asking students what would be the top five gifts they would like to receive this year and the results might surprise you.

The number one gift choice was clothes with 40% of students asking for it this year. And of course who doesn't like to look "fresh" everyday right?

The gift that reached our [*Wish List continued on Page 3*]

Tradition Brings Hope

By Michelle Gonzalez
& Meri Sarkisyan
Staff Writers

The Toy Drive is a traditional fundraiser that has been at Poly as a part of the leadership program for many years.

"This is the biggest thing we are known for," says Kitt Heilbron. "Poly raises more for this type of endeavor than any other school nation wide."

Every year Leadership raises money to buy toys for the children around the San Fernando Valley for Christmas.

Last year Leadership raised \$34,041 thousand. Their goal this year is to raise \$35 thousand; so far they have raised \$16 thousand.

"We are doing anything and everything we can think of," says Heilbron.

Leadership sells foods and



Photo by Michael Obando
ON THE TREE: Fundraising included selling Poly Christmas ornaments.

beverages, they auction off teaches and students, they also have garage sales, homeroom competitions, raffled a letterman jacket and sold roses on campus.

Leadership will buy the toys on December 15 at KB Toys with 20% discount, and the fire department will distribute the toys to the kids that day.

Seniors catch sickness

By Jose Perez
Staff Writer

It's that time of the year again seniors! Senioritis is back, and it's contagious. Senioritis, a word derived from both the U.S. and Canada, and is a term used to describe a lack of effort, or a type of burnout, used to describe a decrease of motivation from seniors, who are near their graduation.

After being accepted into colleges or other very prestigious schools, these students tend to let their grades drop, therefore forcing the colleges to rescind their acceptances. Schools such as; UCLA, UCSB, USC, and other schools require their accepted students to maintain a GPA of 3.0, with no D's or Fails. Often, seniors neglect to maintain these very basic requirements. Those who suffer from senioritis, are often shocked when colleges and universities send them a letter the summer before their fall semester starts telling them that they can no longer attend the college due to bad grades. This has often lead to tears and toothgrinding anger.

Another issue, is meeting the deadlines.

First, a senior receives a "Provisional Acceptance". In a provisional acceptance, the student is accepted to the university, as long as they take and maintain fair grades in their classes.

If a student does not take the required classes, the university is allowed to revoke their acceptance. "Do not take easier classes! If you are taking hard ones, keep the momentum going, because you want the University you may be attending to see you as college material. Colleges do not want lazy students," says Leona Warman, college counselor.

If you are going to a University far from your home, make sure to meet the housing deadlines as well. Warman says, "Being organized, knowing when your deadlines are, and not

[*Senioritis continued on Page 4*]

Work Now, Play Later

Staying on task is the best advice one senior can give after finding out she was ineligible to apply for college.

By Jennifer Miranda
Staff Writer

“Sorry, you are not eligible to apply for a UC, or Cal State,” is what made my heart shatter into pieces early this year. My entire life I thought I would make it big, straight from high school into UC Berkeley.

I thought I had it made, so I had no problem goofing off my beginning years of high school. 9th, 10th and 11th grade, were easy for me. As a matter of fact I hardly showed up to class. It was just easy for me not go to class, show up and do some make up work, and manage C-average grade.

What I didn’t realize was that, I had jeopardized my chances of achieving my goal of going to UC Berkeley. I learned early in my senior year that I was not able to even apply for any UC or Cal State because of my GPA.

“I’ll make up all my classes. I’ll get my GPA higher. I’ll take every class available,” I told my mentor Joel Monroy. I simply had every excuse in the book. But it was a bit too late. He mentioned how colleges look at students 10th and 11th grades, so no matter what I did, there was just no possible way I would be able to enter the school of my choice. Schools also verify that all students have completed the A-G

requirements, and Schools do not accept any D grades.

To be able to apply to a University of California a student must have and maintain a minimum of a 3.0 GPA, and for a Cal State University, the minimum is a 2.0 GPA. I was lost, confused, and depressed.

Unfortunately my dream of going to UC Berkeley right after high school will not be accomplished, but I will attend Berkeley, just not directly after high school. Luckily for us, Community College is available.

If you find yourself in my situation, you should not choose to end your education. You can attend a community college and then transfer into the UC, or Cal State of your choice. Statistics say that one third of the students transfer to a U.C. each year. Do not look at it, as an “oh I messed up, and this is my only option...” but look at it as an “OK! I get a fresh new start!!!”

To all students, do not put aside your education, because the time you waste is precious and you will not be able to get that back. Work now, Play later, and it will all pay off at the end. Take advantage of the education given to you. Besides, high school years will be over before you can say, “Mom, Dad, I’m going to College!”

The thin line between art and graffiti

By Fernando Marquez
Editor in Chief

Poly students in AP Studio Art were recently asked to paint over and re-do a mural even though it had previously been approved by their teacher. The reason given by the administration was that it appeared to look like graffiti. With this in mind, what can one say about graffiti? What is graffiti? Who is eligible to define it and to censor it?

In the art world no single artist, historian, anthropologist or collector has been able to come up with a definition for art. In Western culture, people have been trained to think that art is only acceptable if figures of authority accept it. A figure of authority in this case would be an individual with knowledge of art either through its study or general experience handling it. They can be museum curators,



Photo by Michael Obando

TENNIS COURT MURAL: *Letters or graffiti at the tennis court? Who decides what it is?*

critics, people who dedicate themselves to the livelihood of art, or institutional figures. Nevertheless, what art or an object of art can be, is limitless and cannot be defined by a single person.

Graffiti in our culture is associated with gang activity. Some graffiti artists spend hours on a single piece in which creativity and effort is applied. Some do this to gain popularity and others for sheer enjoyment. When gang culture and lifestyle has been intertwined with our own culture, graffiti as art is not going to have negative

connotations because it’s perceived as an everyday object. Graffiti can be considered art, regardless.

Who is to say graffiti is not art? Is it the intention that makes it what it is? Or is it the way it looks? Art is an expression of the soul. Art can be anything. When is graffiti, art and art, graffiti? Today this line has been blurred so much by the general consensus that art can be anything. Who then has the ability to say when something is or isn’t art? Art, even less, graffiti intended as art, should not be censored by anybody.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



I would like to commend you for your recent profile of me. I am sure that it was no easy task for you to edit our lengthy interview, and you did an admirable job capturing the essence of some of my stories. Newspapers often don’t get the facts straight, but as embarrassing as it was, everything you printed about me, was accurate. Keep up the good work!

-Jay Kirschner

An alumni greeting from PFC. Jose Armenta

Hello Poly students and staff! Time sure does fly by. It has already been five months since the class of ‘07 graduated and we are alumni now. We have all taken different paths and face different challenges and adventures. As for me I chose a path few dare to take, I chose the United States Marine Corps, the military branch with the most intense and challenging basic training this country has to offer. The Marine Corps is an organization that will push you to your limits, physically and mentally. In the MARINE Corps you learn to never give up even though you feel you can’t go

on any more.

I started training on July 30 at Marine Corps Recruit Training in San Diego. I endured the thirteen weeks of the intense training of Marine Corps boot camp. On October 26, I graduated and became a United States Marine, but the challenge did not end at boot camp. On November 13, I began training at the School Of Infantry for three weeks of Marine Combat Training in Camp Pendleton in San Diego. After the strenuous three weeks of combat training, I graduated on December 4, and received orders to come home for a month of recruiters assistance,



Photo by Efrain Rodriguez
ALUMNI: *Jose Armenta*

which I was more than happy to take. All in all, the United States Marine Corps has given me the most challenging and adventurous four months of my life, and the adventure has just begun.

How Badly Do You Want the Good Life?

Most of us always want to be seated next to the smart one in class just to get a good grade. Or maybe it’s to just learn from how they work. Why do they get better grades? Why do they get bad grades?

This type of situation usually comes up when group work takes place in the class. The similarity between smart and average is similar to the difference between the motivated and unmotivated. There is no doubt that there are many

different types of people, personalities, cultures, problems, ideals, and goals in life. There are people who work hard in school because they long for a life better than their family’s. They want to raise their children in a manner that will suit them, and want a job or career that will pay well or make them happy. There are other people that decide it isn’t worth the effort in school. They are unmotivated, don’t want to help their family, and give up or

refuse to do their best. There are very few people who cheer when they receive a failing grade. Most would cheer when getting an “A” and take pride in it. My teacher would always tell his students “shoot for the moon” which means try your very best. Some got the idea. Students do what they have to do in order to achieve the best life possible.

-Hazel Kazusky
Sophomore

THE OPTIMIST

JOHN H. FRANCIS POLYTECHNIC HIGH SCHOOL
12431 ROSCOE BLVD. SUN VALLEY, CA, 91352
URL: [HTTP://WWW.POLYHIGH.ORG/OPT.JSP?RN=8388297](http://www.polyhigh.org/opt.jsp?rn=8388297)

Editor-In-Chief
Fernando Marquez

Assistant Editor
Jason Castro

Sports Editor
Osvin Gonzales

Page Editor
Jose Perez

Photo Editors
Efrain Rodriguez
Michael Obando

Writers:
Bereniz Aguilar, Christian Banuelos, Demetrios Burnett, Michelle Gonzales, Jose Perez, Adrian Rayos, Meri Sakisyan, Erika Solorzano

Optimist Adviser
Ethel Matlen

EDITORIAL POLICY

The Optimist is the voice of the Poly community and accepts the responsibilities of a free press. The Optimist follows the Code of Ethics for the Society of Professional Journalists. Editorials are the opinions of the staff writers.

LETTERS

Letters to the Editor must be typed or neatly printed in ink and include the writer’s signature. The Optimist reserves the right to edit submissions. Send letters to Rm.11 or Ms. Matlen’s box.

A Treasure Named Elias

By Bereniz Aguilar
& Erika Solorzano
Staff Writers

Michelle Elias is a gift to the entire Parrot family. Elias is in charge of the Parrot Connection Zone-Copy Print Center in room 92 where she teaches office technology.

Elias grew up in Canoga Park she says she has been a Valley Girl her entire life.

“Growing up in the west side of the valley had its moments. Nothing super exciting or enough to do cartwheels, but at least it was peaceful,” Elias said.

Two inspirational women who have inspired Elias’ life are her mother and Dr. Jan Fries-Martinez.

“My mother, by herself raised my brother, my two sisters and I. During our entire school years, she worked the midnight shift so that she could always be there to take us to school and pick us up.” Elias said, “The other inspiring woman is Mrs. Jan Fries-Martinez. I’ve known Mrs. Jan Fries-Martinez for about ten years. During those ten years I’ve worked by her side one way or another. She has taught me so much and has inspired me to continue in my career path.”

Elias was a School Administrative Assistant (SAA) for four years before teaching at Poly. She has been in the clerical field in several LAUSD schools for a total of 10 years.

“I thought it would be great to teach young adults, rather than teaching adults,” Elias said.

Elias is the only one in her family to be in the education field.

“Just me and only me,” she says.

Elias spends her free weekends, which she points out are not that many, with her family at Gorman, where she loves to ride her quad.

“You would find my family and me at Gorman riding our dirt bikes and quads. ‘Got



Photo by Efrain Rodriguez

ISLAND: A vacation at the Bahamas is a favorite for Elias.

sand?” said Elias.

Her favorite place to spend her vacation is at the Bahamas.

“The summers are when I get to take my vacation somewhere different in the world.” Elias said, “I love the tranquility of the island, the clear blue waters, and the white sandy beaches.”

Elias loves the summer, despite disliking the heat.

The most precious memories in her life were her Canoga Park High School years,

She enjoys remembering the good and even some bad times of her teenage years.

She says, “Looking back, I believe that high school was the most exciting time for me.”

Elias enjoys spending time with her two best friends even though they don’t share the same passion for education.

“They’ve been a big part of my life for many years and I would not trade them for anything.”

Elias says, “I have a wonderful husband, a 12-year-old son, 3 stepdaughters, one stepson and an adorable bull dog named Kilo.”

In her family she says they have dysfunctional moments, but over all, at the end of the day they still love each other.

Currently her house has been going through serious renovations and she points out it has been a nightmare. She hopes to be done before the end of next year.

She loves the magazines Glamour, Cosmo, and Allure magazine. She points out that her favorite magazine is, Bon Appetite (this is a magazine full of food recipes).

“I’m a magazine junkie,” Elias said.

When asked the question of what is her favorite room in the house, Elias said

“The kitchen because I love to cook, I was probably a chef in my other life.”

She says that she doesn’t have a favorite color but she loves earth tones.

Elias says that public schools have improved since her school years.

“I do not think so much that there is something wrong with public schools, but I do know that public schools have gone a long, better way since my school years.”

The advice that Elias would give to the students today is the same advice that she says she gives her son,

“Get an education and remember there are no free rides in his world. You would either sink or swim, in the real world it’s every man for himself.

“Kids today are lot more out spoken and daring. When a challenge is presented they are more eager to over come it,” Elias said.

“I am proud to be a Parrot. I believe through my 15 years of experience with LAUSD, Poly has one of the most humble, spirited, genuine students.”

A Picture’s Worth A Thousand Words

By Michelle Gonzalez
& Meri Sarkisyan
Staff Writers

Maria Padua is one of Poly’s newest counselors for 12th grade B trackers.

Polytechnic has 1254 seniors. 200 to 277 of them are B trackers who are assigned to Padua. On a regular day about thirty students come to see her for help.

“I want to help kids go to college,” says Padua.

Padua grew up in Chicago, Illinois.

In Padua’s senior year of high school, she visited California in the summer with her mom.

Padua decided to go to a college in California when one of her aunts offered her the option.

“Don’t let fear stop you from being far from home,” says Padua. “Ignore that voice inside you that says you can’t leave”



Photo by Michael Oblando
SMILE: Maria Padua.

LAST YEAR’S STAFF



YOU could be next

Poly’s award-winning OPTIMIST is looking for journalists for this year’s staff

Don’t wait – sign up now

See your counselor or come to room 11

[Wish List from Page 1]

number two spot was money! Without a doubt! Who doesn’t want cash?

Some things never change. Our survey let us know that teenagers still want an I-Pod and shoes. But this year many teenagers went deeper when 29% of the students said that love and affection is what they want this year. Whether it is to spend peaceful time with their family, fun times with friends, or cuddling with a partner.

Our survey was filled with many other gifts that varied

from the newest technology, such as the i-Phone, to feeling the speed of a brand new car. Although the PS3, an X-Box, and a Lap Top, didn’t reach the top five wish gifts, all of them came very close.

Now you know, and you don’t have to stress yourself on what to get your BFF, or BF, or a family member. Perhaps you will think twice when deciding what to give a loved one, because the student body has spoken, sometimes a simple gesture is worth a million bucks!

Top Gifts for 2007



1) Clothes



2) Money



3) Shoes



4) iPod



5) Love

Padua went to the University of California San Diego for her B.A. but transferred to California State University of Sacramento for liberal studies with an emphasis on education. Padua took a few years off to raise her son, and has returned to college to earn her Masters in guidance counseling at California Lutheran University where she will

graduate in 2008.

Padua likes counseling and she wants to do something else.

“Life is short, I have to follow my dreams,” says Padua.

Padua enjoys taking pictures of people and architectural structures. She’s inspired to become a photojournalist.

“It’s a way to document images in history,” says Padua.

Future looks bright for Girls Basketball

Parrots snag double victory during pre-season bout.

By Osvin Gonzalez
Sports Editor

Poly’s girl’s varsity basketball team is starting off their new season right. They played six pre-season games so far, giving them an overall record of two wins and four losses.

Their two victories against Reseda and Hamilton count for their chances of going to the playoffs.

“In all four games that we lost we were out rebounded by 30,”said head coach Tremeka Batiste.

The Lady Parrots are having a problem boxing out due to a size advantage from the other teams. “The team is small and really fast; if we get better at boxing out and we get the ball we have a real good chance of winning the league title,” said Batiste.

“We do it well at practice, but during the games we just forget and it creates some miscommunication,” said starting post Christine Hernandez.

The team has only four returnees from last season. Jennifer Hagan and Alejandra Gallardo are the only two seniors on the team.

Starting point guard junior Sara Villanueva is averaging 16.5 points a game and 4.2 steals. She is an honor student who came from Chatsworth and made girls varsity basketball team



Photos by Jose Perez

TAKING THE SHOTS: Sara Villanueva (10) and Jennifer Hagan (20) on the court.

her freshman year at Poly.

The Lady Parrots biggest challenge this season is going to be the game against the defending league champions Grant.

“When we played Grant last season we lost by a buzzer beating shot,” said Batiste.

“This season we’ll beat Grant if we step up our defense and play as a team,” said Hernandez

The team plays their first

league game against Grant January ninth.

“We will have a great season as long as we work as a team,” said Batiste.

Lady Parrots take heavy losses from Regents

By Demetrious Burnett
Staff Writer

This season’s Lady Parrots varsity soccer team opened up with a 0-8 lost against Reseda.

“I feel that we have to practice harder and work on certain plays,” said team captain and goalie Erika Munoz.

Munoz injured her right leg during the second half of the game. She continued to play the rest of the game due to the short amount of goalies.

The Parrots showed good defense in the first half. Unfortunately, they couldn’t carry it over to the second half.



Photos by Efrain Rodriguez

DETERMINATION: Although the girls soccer team suffered defeat they are more than likely to make up for it; Co-captain Violet Perez (25) takes it to the Regents

[Senioritis from Page 1]

waiting until the last minute to turn in applications, is the main key to guarantee your college entrance”.

If you’re a senior that has been accepted into a prestigious school, or suffering from senioritis, here are a few tips you can use:

- Remember that receiving an acceptance letter to a college, also means you MUST

maintain good grades.

- If you are receiving a low grade in a class, make sure to talk to the teacher about extra-credit work or possible tutoring a good time before grades are due.
- If a D or a Fail is a possibility on your report card, make sure to send a letter to the college with a reason of why you are receiving that grade.(this often prevents acceptance rebukes.)

[Heroes from Page 1]

to go into the medical field, or law enforcement,” said senior Brian Gudiel. “Sometimes it’s good to know what to do in case of an emergency.”

The class teaches students how to perform CPR, first aid, child birth, splinting, burns, treat bites, how to control bleeding and much more.

“There are certain classes you take in school, that you never use what you learn” So-

nenschein says, “but the things you learn in this class you will use in real life situations.”

After completing the class, students receive a First Responders License. This license indicates that a person is legally certified to perform medical assistance in case of an emergency. The license is good for two years, and can help you get a job.

Poly student, Roger Torres says, “This class is providing

2007 Poly Winter Sports

Girls Varsity/JV Soccer

San Fernando	Home Jan. 4
Van Nuys	Home Jan. 8
Grant	Away Jan. 10
N. Hollywood	Home Jan. 15
Canoga Park	Home Jan. 17
Verdugo Hills	Away Jan. 22
N. Hollywood	Away Jan. 24
Canoga Park	Away Jan. 29
Van Nuys	Away Jan. 31
Grant	Home Feb. 5
Verdugo Hills	Home Feb. 7

Girl’s Varsity/JV Basketball

Reseda	Away Dec. 5
San Fernando	Home Jan. 4
Grant	Away Jan. 9
Verdugo Hills	Away Jan. 11
N. Hollywood	Away Jan. 16
Canoga Park	Away Jan. 18
Van Nuys	Away Jan. 23
Grant	Home Jan. 25
Verdugo Hills	Home Jan. 30
N. Hollywood	Home Feb. 1
Canoga Park	Home Feb. 6
Van Nuys	Home Feb. 8

Boys Varsity/JV Soccer

Grant	Home Jan. 8
Verdugo Hills	Home Jan. 10
N. Hollywood	Home Jan. 15
Canoga Park	Home Jan. 17
Van Nuys	Home Jan. 22
Grant	Away Jan. 24
N. Hollywood	Away Jan. 31
Canoga Park	Away Feb. 5

Boy’s Varsity/JV Basketball

Granada Hills	Away Jan. 4
Grant	Home Jan. 9
Verdugo Hills	Home Jan. 11
N. Hollywood	Home Jan.16
Canoga Park	Home Jan. 18
Van Nuys	Home Jan. 23
Grant	Away Jan. 25
Verdugo Hills	Away Jan. 30
N. Hollywood	Away Feb. 1
Canoga Park	Away Feb. 6
Van Nuys	Away Feb. 8

me with the basics of a first responder which I will need in the future, to be a fire fighter.

Taking the First Responders class at Poly is a great opportunity considering the fact that if a person wanted to complete a First Responder training class anywhere else, it would take that person a period of 12 weeks, and it would cost an amount of approximately 500 dollars.

Ask your counselor today.