

# The Holy Optimist

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School

VOL. VIII

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APRIL 2008

## On the Road to Success

By Jocelyn Portales  
Staff Writer

Harvard, Yale, M.I.T, Duke, Dartmouth, Columbia, Brown, Boston, Berkeley, and UCLA. U.S News and World Reports ranked these universities among the top 20 in the nation and around the world for 2008.

Getting accepted to these high-ranking universities may seem impossible for most high school students. But impossible is nothing for Poly's seniors.

Parrots Perry Nga, Cindy Velasquez, Jonas Calderon, Michelle Aguilar, Juan Fuentes, Alan Giron, and Oscar Flores were all accepted at prestigious colleges.

But it hasn't been easy. They did it by spending nights taking college courses at Los Angeles Valley College (LAVC) and piling on Advance Placement (AP) classes.

"I would wake up as early as 5 am and take college classes until 9 pm," said Poly senior Juan Fuentes. "I got home around 10 pm."

"At times I asked myself 'Why am I doing this,'" said Oscar Flores. "But it was worth it."

Political Science teacher Ron Lehavi said Poly's 27 AP classes are the most offered at any school in the city.

Poly offers AP classes in Chemistry, Calculus, Government, Comparative Politics and more to Math and Science Magnet students and non-magnet students alike.

"The curriculum and standards I set in my classes are high," said Lehavi. "I create exams in which I expect high results from my students. I make the passing grade 100 % and 99 % a fail."

Lehavi helps his students who have potential to go to a great university by staying with them after class and planning their future and convincing them to go to a university.

A generous and committed teacher and friend to his students, Lehavi even helped pay for one student's textbook expenses for a class at LAVC.

[ College on Page 6 ]

## Poly Wowws WASC

### Glowing report commends Poly Community.

By Karinina Cruz  
& Fernando Marquez  
Staff Writers

Poly recently was given an academic check-up and the results are in. Poly is doing quite well, thank you.

The seven-member visiting Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) committee was unanimous in their praise for Poly's student achievements, caring teachers and strong administrative support.

"Clearly, John H. Francis High School is a wonderful school," concluded the WASC preliminary report. "There is a sense of community, genuine caring and will to ensure student success that seldom exists in high schools today."

"The visiting committee was truly impressed with Poly High School to the point where a few of the members have



Photo by Efrain Rodriguez

**CONFERENCING:** WASC gave Poly their final commentary after three days of observation.

requested to come back afterwards to learn more about how we do things to improve student achievement," said Interim Principal Gerardo Loera.

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is responsible for ensuring that public schools in California and the region are using the appropriate curriculum, instructional strategies and assessment methods as mandated by the state. Schools

who meet the requirements receive accreditation status from WASC.

Committee members visited classrooms, conducted focus groups with students, parents and teachers, met with the principal and administrative staff and roamed the campus in researching Poly's academic programs and campuswide objectives.

"WASC members who met with my focus group were

amazed at the way the teachers taught, the students' efforts and everything else on the campus," said Technology Coordinator Levon Yeganyan.

Poly Assistant Principal Ari Bennett and math teacher Devon Richter were in charge of making sure Poly was prepared for the WASC visit and guiding the committee while they were on campus.

"I expected it to be intimi-

[ WASC on Page 7 ]

## Teachers Called Back To Iraq

### Rios and Alatorre answer the call once again.

By Karinina Cruz & Jocelyn Portales  
Staff Writer

The Iraq war is personal for Poly computer teacher Javier Rios.

Rios joined the United States Army, and was sent to Mosul, Iraq in November of 2004.

Amidst numerous tensions in Iraq, Rios' experience was indeed one of a kind.

"Being sent to Iraq was a very unique experience, and you'll never know what can happen from day to day, so it was rarely boring," said Rios. "It was hot, and some days felt shorter than the other."

Rios has been interested in the military life ever since junior high.

"I have been training to be a soldier since the seventh grade," said Rios, "and I started out as a cadet in the



Photo by Efrain Rodriguez

**SOLDIER & TEACHER:** Javier Rios passes on his knowledge to students.

California Cadet Corps in Virgil Junior High School, Los Angeles."

Rios has two jobs: to edu-

[ Rios on Page 7 ]

By Angel Silva  
Staff Writer

Poly freshman coordinator Isaac Alatorre, who already has an August 2004 tour of duty in Iraq under his belt, is headed back next January.

"I still have two years under my contract," said Alatorre.

His previous mission dealt with guarding a base. This time around he will be a Field Radio Operator, making sure communications are up between the "grunts" on the front line and the COC (Central Operating Command) at the base.

In addition to his job as a Field Radio Operator, Alatorre will be a platoon sergeant, with 70 Marines under his command.

"I have to make sure that 70 Marines are trained," said Alatorre. "I guess in a nutshell, I have to take care of 70 Marines."

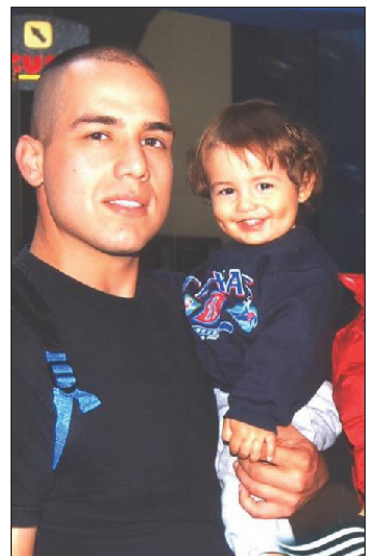


Photo provided by Alatorre

**FAMILY MAN:** Isaac Alatorre and son, Matias.

The Marines will be trained in their specialty as radio operators, and will have to be physically competent and be able to handle any situation.

Alatorre begins training in September at a unit near Pasadena High School. From there

[ Alatorre on Page 3 ]





Internet Photo

## Bring Them Home?

The Iraq War is not a wasted cause, but a conflict with no quick solution. Would any gains America has made in Iraq be lost if Americans troops returned soon? No one knows the answer to that question.

While leaving now might lead to even more violence, America's troops have been fighting hard for five long years and should be allowed to return home.

U.S. forces should be proud of their service to their country. The sacrifices they made were massive and they have succeeded in freeing Iraq from the tyrant dictator Saddam Hussein.

Iraq needs to create a stable government without any more blood spilled so that U.S. troops can be withdrawn and free to fight the war on terror another day. Who knows, the war on terror may be a step closer to an end.

Withdrawing troops does not in any way mean America quit. America has done its part freeing Iraq. Now it's the Iraqis turn.

Polls show that more than two-thirds of Americans want our troops out of Iraq.

The Democratic Presidential candidates agree. Senator Hillary Clinton said she would end the conflict "as quickly and responsibly as I can." Senator Barack Obama said to withdraw troops "not in six months or one year – now." Both Clinton and Obama believe that U.S forces should come home.

Republican John McCain on the other hand believes that "it would be an unconscionable act of betrayal" to withdraw now. McCain even stated that he'd be "alright with having U.S troops for the next 100 years."

The Iraq War began on March 20, 2003, yet the Iraqis still don't have a stable government. The war's cost has been estimated at anywhere from \$1 trillion to \$3 trillion, making it America's costliest war. Four thousand five hundred and seven American lives have been taken from their loved ones.

## OPTIMIST Wins Second Award

The American Scholastic Press Association (ASPA) announced yesterday that the OPTIMIST was awarded first place in the ASPA's annual competition. This is the OPTIMIST's second win in a row. Over 2,200 entrants from high schools and colleges across the United States entered the 2008 competition. "You have an excellent school newspaper which shows the talent



of your editors, reporters, photographers, layout designers and advisors. Congratulations to all on your First Place award."

## Letters to the Editor

### WHAT HOMEWORK REALLY IS

Everyday while I sit through my classes, I look around at all the different students and what distinguishes them. So far, there appears to be three different kinds of students and a simple way to determine what kind of students they are: the determining factor is "homework." I have had a great battle with homework over the years but it is not until recently that I have discovered the reality that is the act of doing homework. Homework is inevitable whether you choose to do it or not and it is a choice no matter how you look at it.

When a person enters a

learning facility, he or she is a student, someone who is willing to conform to something to gain education. Some, I shall say most, don't view it this way for numerous reasons that are of no importance. What is important is the fact that when you take your work seriously and put learning first and do your homework, it is a responsibility just like a job. Doing homework prepares you for work, and it shows that you are mature enough to avoid distractions long enough to go back to school for a couple of minutes before enjoying your day. I was watching Wayne's

World the other day and Jim was telling Wayne that being an adult means understanding that you have responsibilities as well as taking time off to have fun.

Homework is a test, not a test of your knowledge, but a test of your will. Finding the equilibrium between sustaining and indulging is divine. Homework shows with incontrovertible truth that you are taking school and your education seriously.

Manny Aheviez  
Junior

### 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)

#### Editors-In-Chiefs

Jason Castro  
Fernando Marquez

#### Photo Editors

Efrain Rodriguez  
Stephanie Tejada

#### Writers:

Gabriela Burciaga,  
Karinina Cruz, Armando Figueroa Su Kang, Angel Silva, Jocelyn Portales, Gilberto Vargas

#### Optimist Advisers

Ethel Matlen  
John Blau

#### 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.

### Parrot Wars By Raymond Carrillo





# Alatorre back to Iraq

[ Alatorre from Page 1 ]

he'll go to Camp Pendleton in Oceanside, to complete his training.

"Our training consists of learning how to go inside homes, through buildings, and a lot of simulated situations," said Alatorre. "We're going to be training in the desert."

Alatorre expects to be in Kuwait in January, where his unit will then depart to Iraq.

Alatorre now a father, expects this tour to be a more emotional experience for both him and wife Pia Damonte.

"It's actually going to be more dangerous this time," Damonte said. "I can't change it. I just have to know and believe that he'll be O.K."

"I wish that he will come back safe and sound and a lot sooner than he's expected."

Alatorre said he'll take a lot of pictures of 16-month old son Matias and one of his son's shirts.

"He's actually taking a picture of Matias and him at the Aquarium of the Pacific," Damonte said. "He'll be back when Matias is three."

"But at the same time, they respect that it's his duty," Damonte said. "His parents have

a lot of faith that God will protect him and that he will come home."

For Damonte, there'll be more work and less money.

"When he's deployed," said Damonte, "it's like the district puts his job on hold. And I'll have to take care of my son full time."

Politically, Alatorre and Damonte differ.

"He feels it's his duty to go and I feel that his duty is here with his family," Damonte said.

"I'm looking forward to the presidential election because we definitely need a change."

Although her husband is a Marine with Iraq experience, Damonte says she doesn't necessarily have a better understanding of what is going on there than the average American.

"A lot of the info they can't release, so I'm just as in the dark as everybody else," Damonte said.

On Alatorre's previous Iraq tour, his unit had computers and phone lines to communicate with loved ones.

"I'm hoping it will be similar so that I can make a phone call frequently," Alatorre said.



Internet Photo

**EPIC BATTLE:** Link, Mario, Samus, Pikachu, Pit, Meta Knight, and Kirby pause from battle.

## Smashing Things Up

Nintendo brings the highly anticipated Super Smash Brothers Brawl for its third run on the Nintendo Wii.

By Jason Castro  
Staff Writer

Nintendo released Super Smash Brothers Brawl (SSBB) last month to action-starved Nintendo fans in America. Since its release, SSBB has made its way to the hands of more than 1.4 million gamers.

SSBB marks the third installment of the series.

The wait for SSBB however was brutal for many fans with increasing delays. Nintendo pushed its release date from December 2007 to February 2008 and later to March 9, 2008.

But Nintendo made sure no detail went to waste. SSBB is packed with enough bonus material to keep players hooked. Unlockable trophies, stickers, and music adds to the game's depth.

The game features a new adventure mode called "The

Subspace Emissary" which challenges players through a unique side scrolling beat em up adventure. Overall, the adventure will keep players on the edge.

SSBB's main focus is still the multiplayer mode. With up to 41 unlockable stages, SSBB will keep players busy for a long time to come.

SSBB now has 35 playable characters. Veterans from the past like Mario and Link join the fight but newcomers like Solid Snake from "Metal Gear" and Sonic from "Sonic the Hedgehog" join the fight as new 3rd party characters.

The Wii's video hardware gives SSBB fresh new visuals. SSBB shines on the new console. The game is more than just an upgrade from Super Smash Brothers Melee.

Anyone who has played the Super Smash Brothers series will feel the controls virtually



Internet Photo

**BOX ART:** The fight begins.

unchanged. Players now have the choice of playing with the Gamecube remote, the Wii remote with or without the nun chuck, or the classic controller.

For button mashers and hardcore players alike, SSBB brings mindless entertainment that lasts.

# Sarah Is Lovable

By Gilbert Vargas  
Staff Writer

Many people have probably seen the "You Suck Sarah Marshall" billboards around the San Fernando Valley. Or maybe one of the others, such as "My Mother Never Liked You Sarah Marshall" or "I'm So Over You Sarah Marshall." The billboards left many confused and wondering who this "Sarah Marshall" is.

Now that the film is out, everyone knows Sarah Marshall is television star, Kristin Bell. Peter Bretter (Jason Segel) is her musician boyfriend. His world gets turned upside down when she breaks up with him after a six-year relationship, telling him that they are moving in different directions.

After weeks of horrific crying, Bretter makes an impulsive trip to Oahu, where he finds his worst nightmare: his ex-girlfriend and her new British Rock Star boyfriend Aldus from the band Infant Sorrow.

Bretter tortures himself again until he begins flirting with a cute resort secretary named Rachel (Mila Kunis). Rachel tries to console his pain by making him rejoin the



Internet Photo

**HEARTACHE:** Peter Bretter cannot get over his break up.

world, letting him cut loose and enjoy life after a long relationship.

The cast is filled with familiar faces from movies and TV. Segel was in "Knocked Up" and "Freaks and Geeks." Kunis was Jackie in "That 70's Show."

This is a movie for anyone that has ever had their heart broken. You'll fall in love with the cast and actually feel a little depressed when the movie ends.



By Raymond Carrillo



# Internet Help For Homework

*Are you frustrated with your homework assignments? Here is a list of web sites that could help.*

By Su Kang  
Staff Writer

## Math

<http://www.mathforum.org/dr.math>

<http://www.sosmath.org>

<http://www.mathworld.wolfram.com>

<http://www.algebra.com>

<http://www.mathway.com>

## Algebra

<http://www.algebrahelp.com/>

<http://math2.org/index.html>

<http://www.coolmath.com/algebra/>

## Geometry

<http://www.freemathhelp.com/geometry.html>

<http://www.learner.org/channel/courses/learningmath/geometry/>

<http://www.math.com/home-workhelp/Geometry.html>

Math Analysis  
<http://www.math.com/home-workhelp/Trigonometry.html>

<http://www.syvum.com/math/trigonometry.html>

[http://www.acts.tinet.ie/trigonometry\\_645.html](http://www.acts.tinet.ie/trigonometry_645.html)

## Calculus

<http://www.calculus-help.com>

<http://www.math.scar.utoronto.ca/calculus/redbook>

<http://www.math.com/home-workhelp/calculus.html>

## English

<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/index.html>

<http://english-zone.com/index.php>

<http://www.homeworkspot.com/high/english/>

<http://www.sparknotes.com/home/english/>

## World History

<http://highschoolace.com/ace/history.cfm>

<http://www.thebeehive.org/Templates/School/Level3.asp>

## U.S History

<http://highschoolace.com/ace/government.cfm>

<http://www.learner.org/biographyofamerica>

## Government/Economics

<http://highschoolace.com/ace/government.cfm>

<http://www.thebeehive.org/Templates/School/Level3.aspx?PageId=1.527.12058.12063.12087.12096&HideChildLinks=0&Local=1&Lang=1>

## Science

<http://highschoolace.com/ace/science.cfm>

<http://www.homeworkspot.com/high/science/>

<http://shs.westport.k12.ct.us/mjvl/science/bioweb.htm#cells>

<http://www.homeworkspot.com/high/science/biology.htm>

## Chemistry

<http://www.chemicalelements.com/>

<http://chem.lapeer.org/>

<http://www.homeworkspot.com/high/science/chemistry.htm>

## Physics

<http://www.hazelwood.k12.mo.us/~grichert/sciweb/ap-plets.html>

<http://chem.lapeer.org/>

<http://www.homeworkspot.com/high/science/physics.htm>

# Persistence Pays Off For Lopez

By Kevin Portillo  
Staff Writer

Veteran Poly math Teacher Sergio Lopez is fond of telling his students to be persistent. After all, it worked for Lopez.

Born in Jalisco, Mexico, Lopez came to the United States with his mother and two sisters when he was eight. The date was December 12, 1979.

"I remember the date well," said Lopez. "It was El dia de la Virgin Guadalupe (the day of the Virgin Guadalupe)."

Times were tough for Lopez in those days. His family of seven lived in downtown Los Angeles in a single apartment with no bathroom.

"Yeah, it sucked," Lopez said. "There was one bathroom that had to be shared by everyone in the hall. I hated it."

But Lopez persisted, working jobs as a tennis court attendant and a student bookstore clerk.

He also worked as a teacher's aide at Morningside Elementary School while studying engineering at California State University Northridge (CSUN). And it was his experience at Morningside which inspired him to become a teacher.

After earning his math credential at CSUN, Lopez joined the Poly faculty. He has been



Photo by Micheal Obando

**COUNTING PARROTS:** Math teacher Sergio Lopez is a family man.

teaching math and calculus at Poly for over 13 years.

Lopez is also involved in a Math Cadre, helping develop math concept lesson plans for other teachers to use in their classes.

"I want Poly to be a model school for other learning complexes," Lopez said. "I know

we're getting there."

Lopez is married to wife Maria and has three children, Alejandra, 14, Sergio, 9, and Natalie, 5. He spends his free time landscaping and coaching his son in Little League baseball.

"I always try to be a better teacher," Lopez said, "one that

# SPAY AND NEUTER YOUR PETS

By Julie Umemoto  
Staff Writer

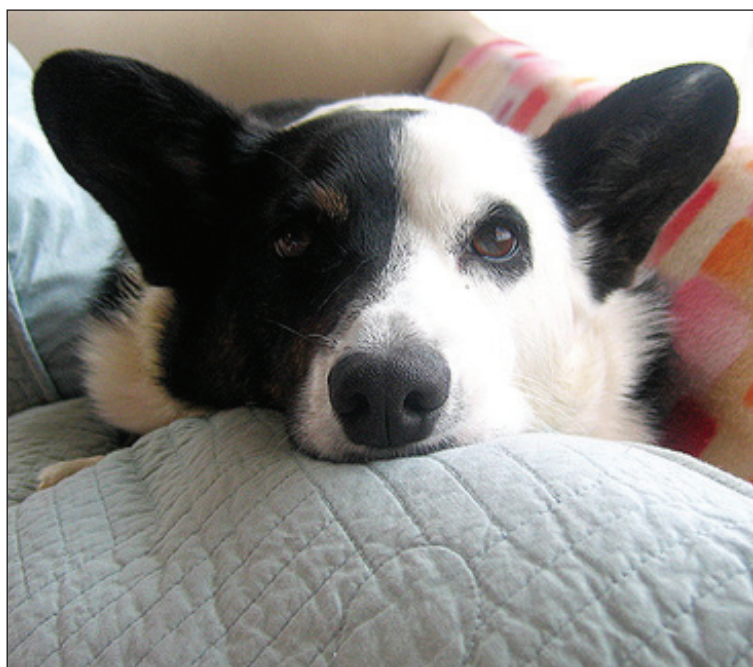
Millions of dogs and cats are killed every year because there are not enough homes for them.

The Los Angeles Department of Animals Services reports that more than a third of the 45,785 animals impounded last year were put to sleep.

The Los Angeles City Council voted this year on a new law to lower the number of animals abandoned and euthanized in L.A. This law states that all animals should be required to be spayed or neutered by the age of four months.

"I think it's a great idea and decision," said Animal Lovers Club member Shirley Arteaga.

Pet overpopulation is a preventable problem that can be solved by spaying or neutering your animals. Veterinarians removing the ovaries and uterus in females ("spaying") and the testes in males ("neutering") to prevent pregnancy.



Internet Photo

**IT'S FOR THE BEST:** Fido waits for surgery.

"It's wonderful that they have this new law," said animal Lovers Club sponsor Karen Danishvari.

"I believe it's a good thing to do," said junior Liset Manzo, another student from the club, "because it might save many cats and dogs. But they

should lower the price so people could afford it."

The city of Los Angeles offers free spaying and neutering. Schedules for the services are posted on [www.laanimalservices.com](http://www.laanimalservices.com).



# Trees Need People

Poly students get hands dirty for Tree People at Branford Park.

By Gabriela Burciaga  
Staff Writer

Sun Valley got a little greener over the weekend, thanks to some Tree People, a city councilman and a lot of Poly students.

Fifty-two oak, cedar and magnolia trees were planted Saturday at nearby Branford Park under the direction of Tree People, a local non-profit organization, and the sponsorship of Council District 6 and Councilman Tony Cardenas.

And every time a tree was planted, a greeting went out.

“Trees need people, people need trees. Welcome, Charley.”

This is how the Tree People do it. Their mission is to inspire the people of L.A to take personal responsibility for the urban forest.

Members of four Poly organizations – Leadership, the Environmental Club, Interact and 10th grade council – got their hands dirty Saturday under the direction of Tree People representatives Rich Poor, Andrew Carter, Carina Mendoza, Joe Vargas, Tim Carver and Nick Nolte.

# Senior Fashion Show Previews Prom Threads

By Julie Umemoto  
Staff Writer

The class of 2008 strutted their stuff in tuxes and formals at the annual Prom Fashion Show in the auditorium.

Thirty couples, all seniors and volunteers with no prior modeling experience, volunteered to model formal wear from David’s Bridal Store and Gregory’s Tux Shop.

“Everybody did great,” Leadership’s Dennise Carrera said. “It brought the class of 2008 closer together.”

The fashion show used the “Fly Away With Me” theme chosen by the senior class.

Junior Vanessa Hernandez was in charge of the attire and senior Dennise Carrera handled the staging and choreography.

“We all put a lot of time into the show,” Carrera said.



Photo by Michael Obando

**FASHIONABLE:** Seniors Rosemary Cuevas and Juan Venegas models prom attire.



Photo by Efrain Rodriguez

**MAG MADNESS:** Video gamers Fabian Sanchez and Julio Martinez exchange fire on Halo 3.

# Gamers Meet To Compete

Poly’s MAG club holds their first video game tournaments

By Angel Silva  
Staff Writer

Poly students got a chance to play and show off their skills in the Magna, Anime and Games (MAG) video game tournaments held last Tuesday, Thursday and Friday after school in room 236.

“We thought that it would be fun to have a game tournament,” said sophomore Efraen Juarez, MAG’s vice-president.

The tournaments were part of a fundraising effort by MAG’s members to earn money for an expedition to the Anime Expo on July 3-5 at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

“We did the multicultural fair and the core members have been selling ice cream outside of school,” said MAG sponsor Hannah Gabriel. “We have tickets for most of our members. I think we just need tickets for the newest ones.”

The games played at the tournaments were Guitar Hero 3, Halo 3, and Super Smash

Bros Brawl. Mario Kart 64 was canceled due to lack of competitors.

Junior Benito Juarez beat senior David Reyes to win the GH3 tournament.

“I felt joy,” said Juarez, “and mostly I thought it was surreal. I was speechless.”

Gabriel doesn’t believe gamers make poor students

“Music and video games are Benito’s passion,” said Gabriel, “but he’s also doing well in my class.”

“Video games have been a part of my life since I was a little kid,” Juarez said. “Guitar Hero has been a greater part of my life.”

Junior Fabian Sanchez, who won the Halo 3 title, said his parents don’t agree with Gabriel’s experience.

“My parents don’t like me playing videogames because I don’t do my homework,” Sanchez admitted, “but I love it.”

Forty students competed in the Super Smash Bros Brawl tournament on Friday.

“My heart was thumping like crazy,” said sophomore Scott Castro. “The SSBB theme song gives me confidence.”

North Hollywood High students Kris Green, Erick Perez, Daniel Alvarez, and Ricky Patel also attended the Brawl



Internet Photo

**XBOX 360:**The console itself. tournament.

The Brawl tournament was a series of 1-on-1 matches with a stock of three lives and a time limit of three minutes. The player who had the most lives at the end of the match moved on to the next round.

The SSBB title fight between Poly’s Alex Juarroz and NoHo’s Erick Perez drew the most attention. Students clustered around the screen, drawn to the melee between Perez and Juarroz as Luigi and Fox.

Juarroz won the heated match, bringing cheers around the room when he was presented his gift card and certificate declaring him the SSBB tournament champion.

Perez and Ricky Patel, also from North Hollywood, took second and third place.

“Poly’s gamers kind of sucked but Juarroz was pretty good,” Perez admitted.





# LA Times Sponsors Journalism Day

By Jocelyn Portales  
Staff Writer

The Annenberg School of Journalism held its twice-yearly High School Journalism Day Friday at USC. Some 230 high school students and faculty advisors from Southern California attended the daylong event, sponsored by the Los Angeles Times.

"This event is an opportunity for high school journalism students to learn from professional journalists and USC faculty," said event coordinator Diane Guthman. "We hope that students will gain practical information that they will be able to apply in their high school journalism program."

Students attended workshops on a variety of topics including Investigative Reporting, Online Journalism, Layout and Design, Broadcast Reporting and Sports Journalism. The day concluded with a keynote address from former CNN senior Asia Correspondent Mike Chinoy.

Los Angeles Times reporters Matt Lait and Scott Glover discussed their investigative series on the Rampart scandal, in which dozens of L.A.P.D. officers in an elite anti-gang unit made false arrests, gave perjured testimony, and framed innocent people.

"The watchdog role is what it is all about," Glover said.

In the Broadcast Journalism workshop, producer John Cyrus Smith discussed broad-

cast news and how journalists always "have the front seat in life."

While producing Channel Four news, Smith ran a segment concerning an elderly woman and a stolen wheelchair.

After the segment, director Steven Spielberg called to say he wanted to "assist the elderly woman and buy the newest state-of-the-art wheelchair available in stores."

Chinoy talked about the hardships, the dangers, and the unusual opportunities of being a foreign correspondent for a major U.S. news organization. Chinoy was at Tiananmen Square in 1989 as Beijing Bureau Chief, interviewed North Korean dictator Kim Jong-Il and reported on 2007's tsunami.

Poly Journalism Department students attending the event included sophomores Maciel Luna and Jessica Soto, OPTIMIST editor Jason Castro, and staff writers Karinina Cruz and Jocelyn Portales.

Guthman believes USC's High School Journalism Day can be a valuable experience for students.

"I think it's a great opportunity," she said. "We hope to give them a little taste of what life is going to be like as a journalist and maybe some tips on how to break into the business."

"I hope they learn something new and get inspired and excited about their futures."



Photo provided by 10th Grade Center

**ROLE MODELS WANTED:** Laura Hernandez, Stephanie Barba, Katherine Urbay-Abanto, and Brigitte Urbay-Abanto explore professions at Los Angeles Valley College Career Day.

## Seminar Promotes Careers for Women

By Su Kang  
Staff Writer

"Adelante Mujer" ("women move forward") was the theme of a conference at Los Angeles Valley College March 8, sponsored by the Comision Femenil SFV (Feminist Commission of the San Fernando Valley).

"The conference brought role models for Latino women," said 10th grade Coordinator Lori Combs. "Role models let young girls know what kind of careers there are."

The purpose of the conference was to inspire girls to choose higher education and professional career paths. Presentations covered topics such as law, medicine, education, engineering, psychology and social services.

"It focuses on careers in medicine, law, education, engineering, technology, and business," Combs said.

Many women face obstacles when trying to pursue a job that is a male oriented often judged by their gender.

"They face discrimination as far as pay. Many women do not get paid as much as males," stated Combs. The main issue is salary.

The conference challenged the girls to pursue a career they might never have dreamed of.

"The career that I found interesting was law," said sophomore Stephanie Barba, "because I like to argue. It helped me. It kind of caused me to change my mind."

Seventeen Poly sophomores attended the event.



Photo by Staff

**OPTIMISTIC:** Poly journalism students Jessica Soto, Jocelyn Portales, Karinina Cruz, and Maciel Luna at USC.

## Lehavi Students College Bound

[ College from Page 1 ]

Thanks to Lehavi's high standards and high expectations, his students received numerous college acceptances.

Poly seniors Oscar Flores and Jonas Calderon received acceptance letters from John Hopkins University, known for being the first research facility in America and one of the top research facilities in the country.

Juan Fuentes received an acceptance letter from Swarthmore University, which U.S. News and World ranks as the nation's #3 liberal arts school.

The consistent success of Poly's Magnet students is a result of the world-class academic program offered at Poly and the high level of motivation of the students themselves.



Photo by Efrain Rodriguez

**TOP OF THE CLASS:** (from left to right, top to bottom) Alan Giron, Juan Fuentes, Oscar Flores. Cindy Velasquez, Perry Nga, and Michelle Aguila.



# Rios To Return To Iraq

[ Rios from Page 1 ]

cate Poly students, and to serve his country.

“The thing about being a soldier is that once you got through boot camp, you never forget how to be a soldier,” said Rios. “It’s in your blood forever, also being a Reservist one weekend a month helps me remember what my second job is.”

A Poly graduate of class 1995, Rios was also a member of Poly’s first class of students to join AFJROTC CA-937.

“Four days after graduation, I left for bootcamp to Ft. Knox, Kentucky,” said Rios. “There I was reborn as a 19D-Cavalry Scout Reconnaissance Specialist.”

Rios was then stationed at Ft. Stewart, Georgia, and lived there for three years.

After his first assignment ended in 1998, Rios started working at Polytechnic High School, Sun Valley.

“I have done various jobs at Poly including: campus security, teacher’s aide, computer lab technician, and technology coordinator assistant,” said Rios. “I achieved my A+ certification and now I teach an A+ certification class.”

Rios currently remains in the United States, but there is a high probability that there would be a second time sending this soldier back to Iraq.

“If I have to go back, then of course I could do that, and I might not necessarily want to go back, but I would,” said Rios. “It really is a little easier the second time because you know what to expect and you know how to deal with it better.”

Although Rios considers serving the United States as an honor, there is still nothing better than being home with family.

“I have always been, and will always be proud to serve my county,” said Rios. “If I am going back what I will miss the most is my family: my wife Teresa, my son Felipe, and my new daughter Samantha. They are what matter the most, and they are what keeps me going day after day, even if I am not in Iraq.

According to Rios, the reason why the United States is still at war is because there is



Photo by Efrain Rodriguez

**READY FOR INSPECTION:** Gerardo Loera and WASC chairman Patrick Walsh prepare for class observations.

## WASC Report

[ WASC from Page 1 ]

dating,” said senior Rosemary Cuevas. “Accreditation is important and it depends on what we say and do.”

“Poly has made tremendous strides,” said career coordinator Pia Damonte, “and you can see it in our results.”

The WASC committee, led by Palm Desert High School Principal Patrick Walsh, presented their findings to Poly’s faculty and staff at the conclusion of the committee’s four-day visit after school on Wednesday, April 4th, in the cafeteria.

WASC committee member Dr. Edgar Scott said he was skeptical when he read the 210-page report on Poly programs mailed to WASC committee members by Principal Gerardo Loera some weeks ago.

“They (Poly) were either that good or lying,” Scott said. “Poly is that good, and should be a model school for California.”

Committee member Michael Mooko praised Poly’s significantly higher CAHSEE math and English scores and noted that Poly had the highest graduation rate in the area.

“I’ve seen a lot of things here I will probably incorporate in my classes,” Mooko said.

“There are some awesome things going on at this campus,” Highland High School Senior Aerospace instructor Major Conrad Hernandez said, “including your 129-point increase in API scores over the past five years.”

“All staff, students and parents were well prepared for our visit,” Tewinkle Middle School Principal Kirk Bauermeister said.

“With successful implementation of your action plan” Walsh concluded, “Poly will shine as an example of excellence throughout the state.”

no quick solution.

“My point of view of this war is that it is necessary,” said Rios. “One way or another it had to happen, and I feel that no one is more opposed to the war than a soldier is. Our job is to pray for peace, but prepare for war.”

With the presidential ele-

tions around the corner, Rios is still undecided on who to vote for, but the bottom line is that the war in Iraq will take time. Democrat or Republican, no matter who is in office, the president will realize the same thing.

“We cannot just stop the war from one day to the next.



Photo by Efrain Rodriguez

**FOCUSED:** Bianca Alvarenga gives student input to WASC.

That is unrealistic and impossible. It’s like a car stuck in the mud,” said Rios. “The best thing to do is wait till the mud dries so you can get out. Otherwise you keep going deeper and deeper, so I guess the answer is time.”

“I do see a purpose and no matter what the outcome, I

am always proud to say I am, I have been and I will always be a soldier,” said Rios. “I am proud of the fact that I had the personal courage to step forward and volunteer for my country. This makes it truly my country and that can never be taken away. It goes a bit deeper than pride.”





Photo by Michael Obando

**SINGLES SUCCESS:** #1 singles Perry Nga has led Coach Bryan Blocks squad in its recent series of close wins.

# The Difference a Year Makes

By Armando Figueroa  
Staff Writer

There is always room for improvement. Just ask Poly's varsity tennis team.

This season's 5-5 mark is considerably better than last year's 2-8 record.

Team members feel a part of this season's success reflects the help they got from new coach Brian Block.

"Coach Block is relatively new to tennis coach," said #3 singles Daniel Jimenez, "but considering that, he's done a good job."

Block has stressed the fundamentals.

"They have generally always known how to hit the ball," Block said, "but recently

I have been teaching them where to hit the ball."

Jimenez agrees.

"Coach focuses on positioning and developing a good net game," Jimenez said. "I think pretty much we all have a good understanding of the game now. Coach has made sure of that."

Experience helps too, according to Jimenez.

"Except for three new players, we are all returning," said Jimenez. "We have six seniors, four juniors and four sophomores. I think that is part of this year's success. We're all more experienced and we know what it takes to win."

Coach Block has emphasized mental toughness.

"Now I'm helping the team improve on the mental aspect

of the game," said Block.

"On the court, it's mostly about mental rather physical."

All that concentration on mental toughness paid off when the tennis team outlasted Sherman Oaks 4 to 3 in an exhausting four-hour match Wednesday. Wednesday winners included singles player Daniel Jimenez, and all three boys' doubles teams: Kyle Abrigo and Billy Song, Faran Khatal and Jasmit Nijjar, and Reynaldo Orozco and Steven Huynh.

Following a 7-0 loss to North Hollywood on Monday, Poly ended the regular season in a four-way tie with Sherman Oaks, Verdugo and North Hollywood for second place in the Sunset Six league. All four posted 5-5 records.

## Track and Field Wrap Up

Compiled by Optimist Staff

### Poly Vs Canoga park

#### Varsity boys -1600, 800 meters, long jump

Jose Rodriguez swept the 1600 meter race. Edwin Dias and Segundo De Leon kept it close with Jose taking 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place. In the 800 meter race Ivan Mendoza ran with heart, gaining a PR of 6 seconds, going from 2.21 to a 2.15. Stallone Watson impressed Canoga Park with his long jump taking 1<sup>st</sup> place. Poly brought home a victory of 105 to 22 over Canoga Park.

#### Varsity girls – 800, 1600, 3200 meters

Gracia Arechiga passed her own teammate Alexandra Gallardo and took the 800 meter race. The girls are 2 and 3. Erika Munoz and Denise Espinosa contributed to the victory over Canoga Park with 1<sup>st</sup> and second place in shot put. In the 1600 and 3200 meter races the girls showed determination and attitude.

### Poly Vs Verdugo Hills

#### Varsity Boys – 200 meters, 4x4 relay

Stallone Watson and Michael Parks left Verdugo Hills behind in the 200 meter race and focused on the only competition which was each other. Hector Vega, Anthony Carreno, Alex Garcia, and Michael Parks cut it close in the 4x4meter relay but brought home the victory.

#### Varsity girls – 3200 meters

The girls are 1 and 3. In the 3200 meter race the girls ran with their heart more than anything. Their goal is to gain a victory against Canoga Park.



Photo by Efrain Rodriguez

**HURDLES:** Leaps and bounds put Track and Field Parrots ahead of all the competition.

## Track Flies Past the Opposition

Parrots prevail despite baton mishap.

By Erika Munoz &  
Noemi Tovar  
Staff Writers

The 4x4 relay gave the Parrots a close 64-62 victory over the Verdugo Hills Dons.

Parrots Hector Vega, Anthony Carreno, Alex Garcia and Michael Parks ran four impressive 400 meters each, passing a single

baton and giving Poly their fourth straight victory.

Vega took a 50 meter lead for the Parrots. Carreno kept the lead up until the exchange with Garcia.

The baton fell in this exchange and slowed the Parrots down. Garcia quickly reacted to the fall of the baton and sped off with it to make up for the lost of time.

At this point, the Parrots were cutting it close. Verdugo quickly closed the gap that Poly had created in the first two 400 meters. Garcia then pulled out his last burst of energy and regained 45 meters.

Parks flew off the starting line with a set route towards the winning line that was still 400 meters away. The Poly athletes held their breath, stood up from the stands and rushed towards the track.

Once Parks crossed, the finish line everyone felt a sense of relief because they knew that the race was over and that the victory was at hand.