

The Poly Optimist

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School

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DECEMBER 2008

Car Markets Crash

By Angel Silva
Staff Writer

The Big Three-GM, Chrysler, and Ford-are in big trouble.

The three car companies face massive amounts of debt. For example, GM's net worth was \$-59.939 billion as of June 30, 2008.

For a long time, the vehicles that made the most profit on the market were big, inefficient gas guzzlers like SUV's and trucks.

When gas prices began to rise and demand for such vehicles fell, less people bought them, thus decreasing revenue.

December 9 and 10 were busy days in Congress. A bailout plan was created for the short term \$15 billion bailout of GM and Chrysler.

Ford will not seek federal aid, since the company is economically better off than the other two.

However, the bill failed to pass past the Senate on December 11, losing by a vote of 52-35.

The bail-out plan would have appointed a federal official, dubbed the "car czar", to be in charge of the money received by the companies.

The "Car Czar" oversees the companies new plan for their economic policies, and to reconfigure their facilities to build more efficient vehicles.

In addition to this, the auto bailout plan would have also required the car companies to reconfigure their factories to produce more efficient and alternate energy vehicles, would protect worker's jobs, and would require the sale or removal of CEO's private jets.

If the GM and Chrysler do not receive federal aid in the next few weeks, their companies may fail. Jobwise, a fall of the Big Three can result in a loss of approximately 3 million jobs in the American auto industry.

FIRES HIT HOME

Poly faculty member loses everything except hope.

By Angel Silva
Staff Writer

The past month, the fires that raged through Sylmar and destroyed a mobile home devastated more than 24,000 acres in the Orange and Riverside Counties.

For Special Education English teacher Ellen Urciola, these fires came too close for comfort.

"We lost absolutely everything," said Urciola. "I think that was the hardest part it all burnt right to the ground."

Urciola was one of many people whose homes in the Oakridge Mobile Home were destroyed in the fires.

[See FIRE, pg 3]



Photo provided by Ellen Urciola
RUINS: Burnt rubble is all that remains for victims of Sayre Fire that stretched from Sylmar into the Santa Clarita Valley, destroying 24,000 acres of land and 567 mobile homes.

Parrots Feed Fire Victims for Thanksgiving

Leadership, Cooking Club provide all the trimmings.

By Angel Silva
Staff Writer

Thanksgiving is a time when Americans gather around dinner tables. Thanksgiving is a time when Americans gather around dinner tables. Poly provided that table for many fire victims.

Families who lost their homes in the fires that ravaged Sylmar had at least one reason to be thankful on Thanksgiving. Poly's Leadership served them dinner in the Cafetorium.

"We've been planning this

since right after the fires," said Leadership senior Mark Ramos.

Poly's Cooking Club prepared enough turkey, corn, fruit salad, cake and pumpkin and cherry pies to feed 250 people.

"They peeled close to 100 pounds of potatoes, cooked 40 turkeys, and prepared nine gallons of gravy," said Chef Robert Higgins.

The dinner's sponsors included Leadership, the Cooking Club, and outside volunteers such as Jack Hay,

who was asked by Leadership's Kit Heilbron to take care of publicity.

"All these children create school unity," said Hay. "We're just individuals trying to help."

Despite having a low turnout, those present were grateful for the feast.

"I'm very happy and appreciate what you all have done for us," said Hipolitano Ramirez, a Sylmar fire victim.

"Today's supposed to be a day of rest and here you guys are, working."

Poly participants said they that they were happy to help others less fortunate.

"We're all just doing our part," said junior Jose Yarez, who is part of the Cooking Club.

Having a full Thanksgiving Dinner allowed these victims to come together and support each other.

"You know it is Thanksgiving, and we're trying to give the people that lost their homes something to be thankful for."



Photo provided by Valeria Silva

GIVING THANKS: Parrot Chefs cook to help the community.

Leadership Gives for Christmas

By Cassandra Lynn Phillips
Staff Writer

Poly's tradition of putting smiles on children's faces continues.

Poly's Leadership fundraises for the yearly Toy Drive to provide and distribute enough toys for at least 2500 kids in the Los Angeles County area.

Leadership planned to raise \$35,000 this year.

"This is the most successful toy drive in the nation," said Leadership sponsor Brian Le Clair.

[See DRIVE, pg 2]



Photo provided by Leadership
BUNDLES OF JOY: This is the last year for KB Toys' partnership with Poly.



Bleeding Love

See Teeth | Page 3



OPTIMIST at USC

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Power on the Court

See Regents | Page 4

LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Dear Editor:

I am very impressed with the professional quality of the Poly Optimist school newspaper. The stories go far beyond being a school gossip vehicle and explore real issues in the world beyond high school. The quality of the writing shows well developed ideas and thought. Obviously you have been well schooled. Congratulations to the students who are a part of the paper. You will use these skills as you go onto college and be glad you learned the concise writing of the journalistic field. And congratulations to Ms. Matlen and Mr. Blau for reinvigorating the school paper.

Keep up the good work... and more students need to sign up for the experience. See your counselor to do so.

BEVERLY SHORE,
COUNSELOR

EDITORIAL

No Money for College Fees

Ouch. With money being tight, seniors will have bigger worries than their acceptance to college.

Many students applying for financial aid may not receive grants from the government and banks may be hesitant to loan money.

The recession we are experiencing is far from being resolved and is definitely not friendly. Economists believe it will crush the nation for another ten years.

Many Americans are already having difficulty keeping up with the expense of daily necessities, much less stabilizing themselves financially.

There are some families have been pushed out of their apartments due to their manager's inability to pay mortgage.

Most low-income families can't afford ideal gifts during the holidays. Some crossed out a number of people from their Christmas List.

However, seniors as well as other students shouldn't be discouraged.

Many companies and organizations still offer scholarships.

The College Office have a list of scholarships students may apply for and more are available online.

OPTIMIST STAFF GOES TO USC



By Karinina Cruz
Staff Writer

The Poly OPTIMIST staff attended the yearly High School Journalism Day held at the University of Southern California (USC) on November 21, 2008.

The day included 260 participants from 45 different schools across Southern California.

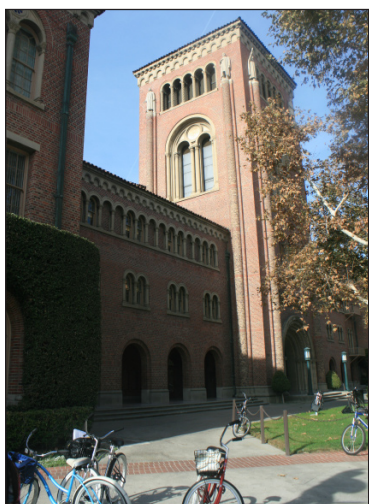
Sponsored by Los Angeles Times, the event featured workshops and panels hosted by award-winning professional journalists.

The day started off with breakfast in the Annenberg East Lobby where student newspaper staff from different schools had an opportunity to share ideas.

Students attended workshops focusing on different aspects of journalism, Broadcast Journalism, Television production, Online journalism, Sports journalism, College produced newspapers, Yearbook editing and Press Conferences.

David Westphall, USC Annenberg's Executive in Residence, wrapped up the event with a keynote address that acknowledged the influence of the new digital age on the media and also its effects on the 2008 Presidential Campaign.

The Poly OPTIMIST participates in the event every year.



All Photos by Michael Obando

Pencilhead



Poly love Continues to Grow

[DRIVE, from pg 1]

Leadership started this year's toy drive in July and has already raised over \$24,000.

Leadership held auctions, sold food and beverages everyday during lunch and petitioned for donations from local business to raise funds for the Toy Drive.

"I expect unwillingness to give up and new, creative ideas to be successful," said Le Clair.

The Toy Drive began 50 years ago when the son of Athletic Director Al Richard was hospitalized.

Richard found out how many hospitalized children did not receive presents for Christmas in his visits during the holidays.

On December 19, Leadership will shop at KB Toys who gives Poly 20 percent discount on all purchases.

BE PART OF THE OPTIMIST POLY'S AWARD WINNING PAPER. SIGN UP NOW.

THE OPTIMIST

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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 Mrs. Matlen's box.

Losing All but Hope and Family

[FIRE, from pg 1]

"It was shortly before midnight, and we were asleep. And all of a sudden, the phone rang," said Urciola.

A phone call that night saved the lives of Urciola, her husband Joseph, and their dog, Eli.

"It was neighbor across the street, and the message on the phone told us that we had to get up right away because the fire had reached the perimeter of the park," said Urciola.

"We got up, and sure enough, the ridge at the top of the park was on fire."

From there, Urciola and her family were ordered to evacuate.

"From that point that we had woken up we had 20 minutes

to get some belongings. The things I grabbed were school stuff-concept plans, stuff like that," said Urciola.

They left for 10 days, confident that they would return to their home.

"We didn't think we were going to be gone for the more than two or three days, that the firemen were going to take care of it," said Urciola.

Urciola, who had been a professional chef before becoming a teacher, owned a restaurant in Connecticut for 12 years.

"I lost all of the recipes that I used in my restaurant," said Urciola. "I also had a couple of rare cookbooks from the 1800's that were silver-lined that went up in the fire."

"It seems like my whole existence was erased that night. If you stay on that memory, you get depressed."

Her husband lost autographed pictures of famous artists such as Bill Cosby, Perry Como and Clyde McCoy, along with some artwork.

"Joseph's an artist. He lost all of his artwork," said Urciola.

Joseph Urciola, who graduated from Yale School of Art in 1952, lost several paintings

and supplies.

"All of his art supplies are destroyed," said Urciola.

Urciola didn't just lose a home that night-she lost a part of her.

"It seems like my whole life-my whole existence-was erased that night."

Despite the losses, Urciola is optimistic.

"You have to laugh about these things. There's an old saying-'the show must go on,'" said Urciola. "If you stay on that memory, you get depressed."

"Bottom line is, I still have to get up in the morning to get to work."

It's here at work that she has received support from faculty.

Bilingual Coordinator Gigi

Slezak organized a system of donations from the faculty for Urciola, netting one thousand dollars in donations.

"I think people wanted to help because they are sympathetic, since at one point or another people in California have experienced something like what she did," said Slezak. "People tend to be generous."

Urciola extends her gratitude towards the Poly faculty.

"The Poly faculty has been absolutely wonderful and supportive. It's just touching to see a school as big as Poly to come together for one person," said Urciola.

"That is very comforting-and especially being a new teacher. I feel really lucky to work here."

Favorite Christmas Wish List

By Cindy Alegria
Staff Writer

The season of gifts and wishes is here. Poly Parrots picked out the top five gifts for this year.

The OPTIMIST put together a survey asking for students' most wanted Christmas gift.

The results are in and the top five are: clothes, money, a cell-phone, preferably the new Blackberry Storm, an Apple iPod, and shoes, respectfully.

Many Parrots wished mainly for happiness and peace in their relationships with family and friends.

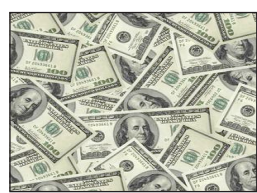
Cars, PS3's, XBOX 360's, games, laptops, pets, new instruments and cameras fought to beat the top contenders.

More profound wishes were to have a boyfriend/girlfriend, world peace and a flat screen TV.

The OPTIMIST staff would like to wish you a Happy Holiday and may your wishes come true.



I: Clothes



II: Money



III: Blackberry Storm



IV: iPhone



V: Shoes

A Romance To Sink Your Teeth Into

By Cassandra Lynn Phillips
Staff Writer

Twilighters mobbed theatres across the country on opening day.

The movie Twilight based on Stephanie Meyer's worldwide best seller of the first installment of the Twilight saga, hit theatres on November 21.

Twilight took a \$70.55 million bite out of the box office opening weekend.

Most of the film's instant popularity was achieved partially by Robert Pattinson's portrayal of Edward Cullen, the coveted vampire.

The movie's theme centers around forbidden romance between Bella and Edward.

Isabella Swan, played by Kristen Stewart, moves from sunny Phoenix, Arizona to rainy Forks, Washington to live with her father.

Bella starts a new school and is immediately drawn to Edward, the mysterious classmate.

Initially, the closer Bella



Photo provided by twilighters.org

UPA TREE: Robert Pattinson shows Kristen Stewart his supernatural powers.

and Edward become, the more determined he is to push her away.

Yet, both cannot deny their infatuation for each other, even as Edward confirms in Bella her suspicions about his immortality.

Despite Edward's secret, Bella can't stop falling in love with him.

The film didn't win critics over bringing mostly negative reviews, and Twilight didn't live up to book fans expectations.

The acting of Stewart and Pattinson seemed awkward and overly dramatic which didn't fit the vibe the book had created.

I expected something entirely different from reading the book.

If you haven't read the Twilight series of books you'll probably enjoy the movie.

But if you have already read the books, you might walk away from the movie feeling a little disappointed.

College Journal

As a service to our readers, the OPTIMIST asked one Poly senior to tell us about her senior year. Below is the seventh installment of her story.

By Belle Tadana
Layout Editor

Finally done with those college applications, eh?

Seniors applying for private colleges still have time to send in their applications, depending on the university.

Next step? Getting the money.

There are four different types of financial aids available for students.

"Money should not be an issue when attending college," said college counselor Leona Warman.

Before anything else, students must fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, otherwise known as FAFSA.

The FAFSA require information from your parents' tax returns. Make sure to

remind your parents to file theirs.

The first type of financial aid is a grant, free money that does not need to be paid back.

The Cal Grant is the main grant institution award that Californian students apply for. Cal Grant applicants must have Social Security number (SS#).

The application window for the Cal Grant and the FAFSA opens on January 1 and closes on March 2.

So get ready for those.

A scholarship is the second type of financial aid available for students. Scholarships are free money awarded to students for academic achievement or other factors such as nationality,

special talent and more.

Millions of institutions offer scholarships. Some scholarship application forms ask for grade point average (GPA), letter of recommendation, essays, etc.

The third type is work-study.

Work-studies allow students to work within the college campus part-time. The salary may add to their financial aid package to help pay for the college fees.

The last type is the student loan. A student loan is money leased by the bank for students and money that must be paid back.

Don't rely on student loans. You may end up in a large debt.

You Gotta Have Heart

Poly varsity assistant Larry Ziehler believes in making the big effort.

By Chai'se Lowe
Staff Writer

Lawrence "Larry" Ziehler is the name, football is definitely his game.

Assistant football coach Ziehler played JV and varsity linebacker as a Poly student, graduating in 1988.

"My most memorable moment was when we played Van Nuys in 1987," Ziehler said. "I got blind-sided. The following Monday, coach showed the team the tape. He played it over and over again."

The injury ended Ziehler's season.

"I had my hips separated from my spine during mid-season, 12th grade," Ziehler said. "The doctor told me it was going to take a couple of months to walk straight again."

Ziehler said he always played his sports with full effort, not wanting to let his team down.

After graduating from Poly, Ziehler considered majoring in veterinary medicine, but after two years, he realized it was not his "cup of tea." Instead, he graduated from CSUN with his major in Mathematics.

"I would have majored in sports," said Ziehler, "only Mathematics made more sense to me."

Ziehler started teaching at Poly six years ago.

"Math is straightforward, like me," Ziehler said. "I'm short and straight to the point. I learned how to elaborate."

Ziehler teaches Pre-Calculus, Geometry, and Algebra 2. He also taught honors Geometry, and Transitional Academic Mathematics (TAM).

Players on Ziehler

Offensive/Defensive linemen Jorge Jimenez:

"When you're cool with Ziehler he's cool with you. He does his best at trying to correct the team's mistakes. He always finds time to help us out."

"I've been playing football with Ziehler for two years on varsity."

"He would go up against the biggest guys on the opposite team and see if he could tackle them"

Offensive/Defensive linemen Antonio "Big T" Grayer

"I enjoy most when Ziehler gets us more gear."

"Before we play the game Ziehler is cool, collective, and knows for sure our team is going to win."

"Ziehler rewards us with a good job, a hand shake, or we get snacks and just chill."



Photo by Lorena Acosta
GAME ON: Assistant football coach Ziehler

"I taught the whole shebang, except for Calculus," said Ziehler.

Former principal Jan Fries-Martinez asked Ziehler to become an Assistant Football Coach for Poly in 2006 and he agreed.

The Parrot varsity posted their best season of the last five years, with five losses and five wins.

Ziehler relates the team's success this year with the players' sustained efforts.

"This year was a huge improvement over last year," Ziehler said. "They played through the fourth quarter with great effort in almost every game."

Ziehler works hard at what he loves, whether it is mathematics or football. He expects his students to be serious about their work, on or off the field.

"You gotta have heart to accomplish your goals," said Ziehler.

Parrot Triple Threat Overthrows Regents

By Isabella Cabezas
& Brianda Lopez
Staff Writer

If you thought power trios only played rock and roll, think again. Varsity Lady Parrots own triple threat of Crystal Cristales, Sara Villanueva and Christine Hernandez scored 54 points between them Wednesday night against visiting Reseda in a 66-53 preseason Poly win.

Senior guard Cristales, who seemed to turn the basketball into a hoop-seeking missile, sent three pointers flying from every area of the floor on her way to 22 points. Senior guard Villanueva scored 21 points on pull-up jumpers, fast break, rebounds and whatever else was available. And post player Hernandez got her 11 points the hard way on rebounds, misses and hustle points.

The combination was too much for the Regents of Reseda, who scored 20 points and a nice performance from sophomore guard Tkia Clay and 16 from senior forward Stella Higgins. Junior forward Jackie Molina added 7.

"We were happy with our defense tonight overall," said Parrot head coach Tremeka Batiste. "The offense could have been better."

Poly's Villanueva scored on a steal and a breakaway layup to put Poly ahead 24-13 with 2:40 left in the first half, but Higgins answered with a long three, Clay followed with triple of her own and Higgins added a two with seconds left to close the gap to 24-20. Cristales answered with a three



Photo by Lorena Acosta
REBOUND: Girl Parrot Christine Hernandez takes jumpshot over Regents defender.

and Reseda got a free throw to end the half at 27-21.

Reseda, who never led, came within a basket at 35-33 with four minutes left in the third, but the Parrots tightened up their defense and ended the quarter up 50-39.

Both teams played sloppy early in the fourth. But the Parrots pulled ahead for good when Hernandez scored on a Villanueva miss, Villanueva scored and was fouled on a drive and Poly junior Priscilla Alvarez scrambled for the

rebound on the missed free throw and scored to put Poly up 54-43.

For the game, Hernandez had nine rebounds, Villanueva had 10 steals and Cristales had six 3s.

The win was Poly's fourth straight and brings them to 5-2 on the preseason. The Parrots travel to Phoenix for a tournament game on December 27. Reseda (0-2), who plays in the Valley Mission league, travels to Canoga Park for a matchup December 12.



Photo by Lorena Acosta
POWER TEAM: (left to right) Sara Villanueva, Christine Hernandez, Coach Tremeka Batiste, Crystal Cristales.