

The Poly Optimist

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School

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SERVING THE POLY COMMUNITY SINCE 1913

MARCH 2012

Landfill Still Toxic

By Julie Ruiz
Staff Writer

The former Sheldon-Arleta landfill, closed in 1974, continues to emit toxins, including methane gas and hydrogen sulfate, a Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation official told Poly administrators last week.

In addition, water released by the Tujunga DWP continues to force landfill gas onto school property.

Methane Mitigation Manager Jeff Otter from LAUSD's Office of Health and Safety and Environmental Engineer John Hamilton from LA's Bureau of Sanitation (BOS) met with Poly Principal Ari Bennett, AP Lourdes De Santiago, Poly Plant Manager Derick Taylor, Lewis Continuation School Principal Hale and Byrd Middle School Principal Sohn Reynolds for a training session that included an overview of current landfill hazards and a review of gas detection systems currently in place around Poly and the landfill itself.

When John H. Francis Polytechnic Senior High opened in early 1957, the site to the north of the school was an active gravel pit. Five years later, the City of Los Angeles turned the gravel pit into a landfill. Parrots attended classes for 12 years across the street from an active landfill. The landfill was closed in 1974. That's when the real problems began.

The organic material in the landfill began to decompose. Byproducts included methane gas and other byproducts that may be carcinogenic at small levels. Methane is produced when bacteria and other microorganisms consume buried garbage.

As the waste decomposes, methane, carbon dioxide and other gases are released. If the methane is not collected, it can migrate through the ground, creating an odor and posing a risk of explosion if it collects in enclosed spaces.

Liquid waste, called gas condensate, is produced when methane is extracted from decomposing garbage, state water officials say.

The Sheldon-Arleta's gas-extraction system has a network of perforated pipes sunk into the layers of aging waste. The condensate trickles down the pipes drains directly into the underlying soil.

Officials first realized that gas condensate could carry toxic chemicals into ground water in 1984. And the Sheldon-Arleta Landfill in Sun Valley was identified as having an unacceptable condensate-disposal systems.

The landfill was next to Los Angeles Department of Water and Power "spreading grounds," where water brought to Los Angeles in

[See Landfill, page 6]



Courtesy of Pedro Oliveira

BIG APPLE: Ex-OPTIMIST editor Pedro Oliveira writes for the NY Post.

Former OPTIMIST Covers the Big Apple

Ex-Editor Pedro Oliveira, Jr. lands New York Post slot.

By Jasmine Aquino
Staff Writer

Former OPTIMIST editor and Poly graduate Pedro Oliveira, 25, took a reporter job with the New York Post on March 6.

"I landed a couple of stories for the Post a few years back, and I stayed in touch with the editors," Oliveira said. "But a lot of times, getting jobs is about who you know—not always just what you know."

Oliveira interviewed U.S. Airways co-pilot Jeffrey Skiles after his jet crash-landed in New York's Hudson River on January 15, 2009. At the time, no one from the flight crew had spoken to the press because the incident was under investigation.

The "Post" ran the interview and a follow-up story January 23. The Post paid Oliveira for both stories.

"I had worked for the Wisconsin State Journal (the state's second-largest newspaper) as an intern the previous summer," said Oliveira, "so I had already been published in a large, professional newspaper."

"But this was the first time I was paid a professional rate to write a story."

The now full-time general assignment news writer—"meaning I do just

[See Parrot, pg 6]

Poly Girls Varsity Soccer Coach Arrested, Fired

Walk-on coach Jose Rosario Alvarez accused of inappropriate relationship with LAUSD 16-year old.

By Yenifer Rodriguez
Editor In Chief

Poly girls varsity soccer coach Jose Rosario Alvarez was arrested on Wednesday, February 21, for allegedly having an inappropriate relationship with a 16-year old girl who attends another LAUSD school.

"The bottom line is that we did not have any idea what he was doing," said Poly Principal Ari Bennett. "Mr. Alvarez was not a teacher at Poly, he was a walk-on coach."

Bennett said both he and Poly Athletic Director Kim McEwen were informed of the arrest Wednesday.

According to KCAL 9, the Los Angeles Police Department's Internet Crimes Against Children unit got

a tip about the relationship on Wednesday, February 22. LAPD determined he had been involved with the girl over the Internet and in person.

Alvarez was booked for unlawful sex with a minor and is being held at the Metropolitan Detention Center on \$20,000 bail.

"We very quickly contacted the community, let people know what was going on, gave the information that we had so everything was out in the open, and they understood what the process was," said Bennett. "He was highly recommended by Panorama High School," said McEwen. "Their athletic director thought a lot of him."

"We have crisis counselors in place," said Bennett,

[See Soccer Coach, pg 6]

Boxer To Block: Nice Work

By Jessica Flores
Staff Writer

The letter was posted from Sacramento and addressed to Brian Block. The return addressee was US Senator Barbara Boxer.

"When I opened it, I was at first surprised and then kind of amazed," said Poly faculty member and Aca Deca coach Block. "To send a letter to a teacher just for working hard, it's really a thrill. It's unexpected. She is obviously busy with our budget both in the state of California and in Washington D.C.. To take time out for a coach to say you are doing a good job, thank you, was surprising and very touching."

"I don't think my students realize what an honor this is," Block said. "I am 50 years old and I have never gotten a letter from a senator. The first thing I did, of course, was email my family."

Among other comments, Boxer congratulated Block for getting Poly's Aca Deca team to the state competition for the second time in three years.

The competition will take place in Sacramento on March 17 and 18.

"Our plane leaves at 7 a.m. on Thursday," Block said. "We will get there bright and early. We will probably have a few extra hours before we check in to the hotel. I'm hoping the students might be interested in actually seeing the Capital building, which is across the street from our hotel."

Poly's local district is paying

for both airfare and hotel accommodations. The team is staying at the Hyatt Regency, across the street from the Capital building.

"We will grab lunch and then they'll have a half a day of studying, when I have to go to coaches meetings and be told the rules of competition."

The competition will be on Friday and Saturday. Students will attend a party Saturday evening. Sunday morning is the awards ceremony and the Parrots will fly back some time Sunday evening.

More than a dozen parents and a cheering section will make the 360-mile drive to Sacramento to join Block, his wife Debra and the Aca Deca members for the competition. All will be wearing Poly Blue and

[See Aca Deca, pg 6]

Barking for Dollars

By Gabriela Melendez
Staff Writer

Poly's Animal Lover's Club and Leadership raised over \$700 co-hosting a week of activities designed to raise awareness about animals along with money.

"This was to raise funds so that if an animal comes on campus needing a home or care, there is money to cover expenses," said Animal Lovers Club sponsor Karen Daneshvari. "I think there are a lot of people who don't realize how much rescuing we end up doing."

"We did this to raise awareness in the school."

Over half of the money raised, around \$400, was with t-shirt sales, which sold for \$15 each.

"So many people wanted an animal lover's club t-shirt," Daneshvari said. "They're beautifully designed. The kids did that completely on their own."

"I picture all these people walking around with 'I love animals' on their t-shirts," said Daneshvari. "It's going to get into the community more and when people see that, I think it just says a lot about Poly that our kids want that message out there."

Poly faculty members who have adopted pups over the years include Shannon Black, Julia Keiper, Sara Rodrigues, Lisa Blackwell, Daneshvari and Leslie Wolfson.

Leadership liaison Cherry Osuyos worked with the club on the week's

[See Barking, next page]



Photo By Diane Alvarado

Those Lips, That Sync

Red hot chili peppers, er, Poly teachers rock out.

CAMPUS - page 5



Photo by Diane Alvarez

Parrots Tame Huskies

Marquez throws three-hit, five K shutout.

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OPINION

OP-ED

Mandated tests merely shadows of truth

The real truth of the current “race for accountability” by our body politic rests in the premise of the infallibility of the almighty state test score. As a veteran teacher in the classroom, one can’t help but wonder if these tests are merely shadows of wishful thinking by our politicians, administrators and pundits.

The reality of this truth of test results must lie at the opening of “Plato’s cave” if indeed, wisdom, reason and intellectual development are to emerge as the credible quest.

The current education system with its necessary mandated curriculum, pacing plans, formative assessments and instruction, aligned totally in sync with the actual test, definitely succeeds in limiting any teacher’s ability to turn his or her head around, to free their chained appendages in order to see the real source of the student’s image and the source of the individual student’s struggle and defeatism. This image, however, remains a number that rarely reflects any accurate measure of a student’s academic growth or success. That number hardly measures the

brilliant intellect of our best and brightest students nor does it reflect the underlying sources of failure and challenges faced by our lowest performing students.

The highest test score does not guarantee a successful future college graduate and productive citizenry, anymore than it can predict the abject failure in life of those who do not pass or raise that number adequately. Performance is always relative, in life, and in education.

Perhaps the citizens in this democratic process should develop a test to measure the competence of politicians and administrative bodies who can then work to improve their GPI (Government Performance Index). If they do not meet that number, they must remain chained to the wall of the cave, staring at the shadows of life behind them.

- Ethel Matlen, English

EDITORIAL

Texting with emo

Since today’s main form of communication is texting, problems have arisen that never had before. Nowadays, if you don’t include an emoticon and an exclamation point in “I love you,” then it isn’t true. The lack of emoticons in a text can be misread as lack of interest or emotion. Some times reactions can amount to arguments, even fights.

This is ridiculous. When I text my friends about everyday things, I write “I’m fine, what about you?” (Yes, I am one of those proper texters.) They reply “wats wrong?? :(”

What? Nothing’s wrong. They assume something’s wrong because I did not put a smiley face?

Honestly, I rarely use emoticons while texting. You should be able to figure out my emotions with the words I use.

I don’t like the use of emoticons. It’s supposed to make a point. Some people use them like punctuation. No, scratch that. They use them MORE than punctuation. Sometimes I see more faces than periods, and that’s definitely a problem. No one is happy every second of the day, so please don’t portray yourself that way. Jeez.

I started thinking about this. Does everyone have this

problem? When I text my parents or other adults, they don’t use emoticons. Come to think of it, some hardly use letters.

For example, my mother texted “wer r u.” She is a definite busybody, while my father’s texting style is similar to mine. Grammatically correct.

I don’t blame anyone for short, misspelled texts. They may not have the time. It still irritates me, though.

And yet another example of the “Lazy Text Syndrome (LTS):” purposely misspelled words. On Facebook I see a post: “Eh don’t noe watt u du wit meself” (translation: “I don’t know what to do with myself.”)

Why slur your words? That seems lazy, mediocre even.

I can’t read these posts, they bother me too much.

Why can’t teenagers take the time to write correctly? Sure, it’s a one-shot text and might be for something unimportant. But having LTS can affect your actual writing. That’s what scares me.

Please, don’t tarnish my generation of young adults with texting prose like that.

Barking for Dollars

[From Barking, Front Page]

activities, everything from a Barkathon on Wednesday to selling balloon animals, face paintings, sing alongs and a costume contest on Thursday won by Minnie and Mickey Mouse.

Human grams - a cookie, cupcake and note – sold for \$1. Doggy grams included dog treats and snacks. Gram sales raised around \$200, according to Osuyos.

All money went to the club.

The fundraiser was spurred by an incident last August.

“There was a little white dog that got hit by a car out on

Roscoe Blvd,” Daneshvari said, “and it managed to get onto our campus. So they called Leslie Wolfson and me.”

Wolfson took the dog to a vet, only to learn the dog had a shattered hip.

“Medical care cost \$2000,” Daneshvari said. “Ms Wolfson was able to find a home for the dog but we have no way of paying her back.”


“I just didn’t feel like it was an option to put the dog to sleep,” Wolfson said. “I knew that it needed the surgery and I just felt like I had to do it.”

The club needs a way to be able to pay for these types of situations without coming out of teachers’ pockets, Daneshvari said.



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the
OPTIMIST

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EDITORIAL POLICY

The OPTIMIST is the voice of the Poly community, and follows the Code of Ethics for the Society of Professional Journalists. Editorials are the opinions of the staff.

INTERVIEW

NO
ORDINARY
SENIOR

Don't be fooled by this Parrot. Her cheerleader/model smile can turn quickly when she's in her mixed martial arts mode.



By Sandy Barba
Staff Writer



Mixed Martial Arts (MMA)

I've been doing mixed martial arts since I was in ninth grade. I went whenever I could. It's a little harder to go now lately with cheer though because it's so time-consuming. But I try to go whenever I can.

My brothers encouraged me to go try it out with them and since then I've been going. I go to a dojo in Northridge with my brothers.

Some days we focus on grappling, which is fighting on the floor. Other days we practice stand up fighting and then we have karate days, which is more standing and martial arts. We also compete against each other for practice, but I've never competed in a real MMA competition. I just went for the training.

They don't let me fight girls, it was always fighting guys. We don't go all out on each other because it's a dojo, but we still go hard on one another. I think it helps make you stronger and if you ever have to fight a guy, then you somewhat know what to do.

My brothers are always telling me not to go easy on them when we fight and they really don't go easy on me, so we really help each other out. We also wrestle each other at my house for fun.

When we do karate, we wear shin guards, our karate suits, belts, and our gloves. We don't wear anything on our heads. So if you get kicked in the face, you get kicked in the face.

The flexibility that comes with cheer helps a lot in the martial arts part of MMA. It allows you to kick higher. Like if I needed to kick someone to the face in a fight, it's easier for me now.

Also, the physical training for cheer, like running, gives me speed and endurance for MMA. And modeling just helps me be all smiles during cheer competitions and performances despite the circumstances. I think they have all also made me a more dedicated person in everything I do.

My mom helps me manage my schedule and make time for everything and she keeps me on check. I've also had to learn time management so I could get everything done.

Modeling

I started modeling in the 6th or 7th grade. It's not like a full time job, but it is something I enjoy doing, to satisfy the photographer and try to give them the type of shots they need or want. A model also has to be able to follow directions.

My sister worked in the fashion industry for Juicy Couture and she got me a job where she works as a fit model, and that's where it started.

A fit model is a model that doesn't take pictures, you're just like a manikin and they use you to measure the clothes correctly and tailor the clothing based on your size. I did size 10, so they would fit size 10 based on me.

After I did fit modeling, they wanted me to do print modeling, which is like taking pictures. Since I'm short, I can't do runway modeling.

I was recently approached by a model scout at the mall and I've started to look into it.

My sister helps find me offers for photo shoots and my mom helps me out with driving me where I need to go and paying for anything I need. Overall, all my family supports me and helps me in what they can.

I don't have an agent. My sister kind of acts as my agent by getting me offers through Juicy Couture and her friends.

Her friends are photographers, so sometimes they need pictures for their portfolios. So whenever they need me to take pictures, I model for them.

Usually they have a theme. It would either be like high fashion or casual. For example, in the last modeling assignment I did; they wanted to do an outdoor theme so we kind of went into the wilderness and we shot there.

Cheer

I started in ninth grade at my old school, North Valley Charter Academy. I was introduced to it, but it was nothing compared to what I do here because we didn't have the proper mats and equipment so we would just do more cheers than actual stunting.

At Poly I was introduced to more aspects of cheer, aspects that I never really knew played such a big part, such as the gymnastics and the stunting. Poly is where I learned to do all my stunts. We even started learning to tumble a little bit.

I cheer only here at Poly. But in the afterhours, I go with my teammates to a cheer gym or a gymnastics gym because they have more equipment coaches that can help us advance our skills. Over there, we practice tumbling, stunting, and our dances together and get any help we might need at the time.

Cheer means a lot and I've been through a lot, physically and mentally. Once you do cheer, it really changes your perspective. I mean, everybody thinks it's so easy, they think it's just little girls in skirts, falling all the time. So did I. But once you're out there doing what we do, it's hard and it's so important to me.

I love it. I can't even begin to imagine doing any other sport; it's all I've ever done.

Last year we participated in competitions that were all at different high schools and we did pretty good but this year we didn't get the chance to since we were left without a sponsor for a period of time.

My parents are more supportive, but everyone tries to help me out. My parents support me by paying for what I need, always telling me to be careful, and coming to my games sometimes to take pictures.



Senior
Veronica
Ruizvelasco's
wide range of
extracurricular
activities
includes cheer,
modeling and
mixed martial
arts.

CAMPUS

Latest Addition to Parrot Family

The OPTIMIST spoke with new 10th Grade Center counselor Tamika Lewis about her new position at Poly and how she spends her free time. Here's what she said.



Photo by Diane Alvarado

AUTHOR: *New Poly counselor Tamika Lewis has written a book about cultural issues.*

I had a teacher who really inspired me to pursue college against all odds and give that sense of empowerment to other students. My teacher's inspiration drew me to counseling.

I started off as a social worker for the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). It was very challenging. I was responsible for recessing physical and social neglect and child abuse. Eventually you come to learn it's a revolving-door experience. The problem is so multilayered and you can only affect a very small part of

By Cesar Quinteros
Staff Writer

it. It doesn't feel like enough.

I was a counselor at Sylmar High for five years. My old school fell into a transition stage. Sylmar is part of the public school choice list. They might get new teachers.

Here it's grounded, functional. The demographics at Sylmar and Poly are similar. The people here are just as warm. The difference is I only counsel 10th. In Sylmar I counseled 10-12.

At Poly, I am responsible for 548 10th graders.

Tenth graders are adjusting to high school and the college-going mindset. 10th grade is a turning point in going to college. The tenth grade counselor's goal is to shape their mindset. I think we are still at the front end of helping students realize their full potential. 10th graders are still trying to form their identities and goals.

A typical work day includes calling in students for their Individualized Graduation Plan (IGP), parent conferences, and programming schedules. Identifying and working with at risk students.

We make sure each student is on a successful path towards high

school graduation and career readiness. I help student with personal problems, career choices, and academic success.

I love the energy of teenagers. They are in a very exciting time in life because of self discovery and curiosity. I find that to be really interesting in that phase.

About half of the counseling position today is scheduling and computer work and half is actually counseling students, one on one and in person. We get big caseloads but we still find the time to talk to students through classroom visits. I definitely enjoy face-to-face vs. caseloads.

But I think we need more financial resources and support services from LAUSD. Counselors are overloaded and have minimal resources. We are unable to serve to our greatest capacity.

There have been many counselors who were cut. Many more will be cut.

PERSONAL

I was born in Culver City and grew up in the Inland Empire. I went to Don Lugo High School in Chino. I got my undergrad degree in English and Sociology at Westmont College in Santa Barbara. I did grad work at Cal State Long Beach for counseling and went to UCLA for my Masters in Social Work.

I have two kids, one boy one girl. One is 3 1/2 and the other is 1. I do bikram yoga to relax.

I bring my lunch everyday. I eat leftovers of all sorts and I'm not picky.

I'm working on being licensed as a clinical social worker.

I've written a book called "Next Generation Student College Readiness for Low Income Students." The book is about cultural issues and overcoming the financial challenges of being a low income student. I've been working on it since October. It's about 150 pages.

I asked the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) and the Education Trust to publish the book.

Every counselor should read Eckhart Tolle's "A New Earth Awakening to Your Life's Purpose" because self-care and health is important for counselors in order for them to give their best.

Coming Up Roses

By Diana Escobedo
Staff Writer

Thirteen Parrots played in this year's All-City High School Honor Marching Band in the 40th Annual Rose Parade. This year's theme was "Just Imagine..."

"It was great," said Poly Tuba player Yoyo Barrera. "You could smell the roses and see the colors."

About 360 students are in the band, led by marching band director Anthony L. White.

"It was a fun and exciting experience to march and play in the Tournament of Roses," said Poly trumpet player April Ocampo.

The All-City Marching Band consists of tubas, baritones, trombones, French horns and trumpets. The drum line consists of bass drums, quads, snares and cymbals.

"What I felt when I did the whole All-City thing was joy and success," said Poly trumpet player Lorenzo Reyes.

All musicians and flag twirlers attending LAUSD high schools and maintaining a 2.5 GPA or greater can audition. Some instruments are provided.

The band had three months to prepare a field show and learn seven songs, including "Spanish Skies," "Celebrate," "Edge of Glory," "Higher Ground," "Patriotic Melody" and "I Will Follow Him."

Practices are every Saturday from October to December. During winter break, practices are every day except Sundays, Christmas Eve, and Christmas day.

Practices are from 9am to 4pm. The buses first pick up is 7am. And the last drop off is 8pm. Practices are held at El Sereno Middle School, and Dodger Stadium.

Band uniforms are provided for students and must be returned after the Kingdom Day parade.

After the Rose Parade, the All-City High School Honor Marching Band members are presented with a white jacket, a poster, a drumhead, pins and a patch.

"That is to show that we dedicated our winter break and our Saturdays to this amazing band," said Poly Baritone Abraham Godfrey, "making friends and learning from each other and marching with pride on parade day."



Google Image

OLD FRIENDS: Former Van Halen lead singer David Lee Roth is back and touring with band mate Eddie Van Halen.

Guess Who's Back?

By Lisa Guardado
Staff Writer

Time flies.

If you don't believe me, check this out.

Van Halen is back.

There is a new album, "A Different Kind of Truth," a new single, "Tattoo," and a new bass player, Eddie's twenty-year-old son, Wolfgang. The band's original singer, David Lee Roth, is also back.

The tour will be Roth's first since he left the band in 1985 and was replaced by Sammy Hagar.

So, how far back does Van Halen go?

Try 1972, when the hardest rocking band in Pasadena, featuring Eddie on guitar and brother Alex on drums, started gigging locally.

Van Halen, with bassist Michael Anthony and singer David Lee Roth added in 1974, started out like every other garage band. They played backyard parties and at Hamilton Park on a flatbed truck. They played at high schools and promoted themselves by giving away flyers.

Audiences grew. They began playing in major clubs such as the Whisky a Go Go and Gazzari's. By the time the band played the Pasadena Convention Center gig, their ship had come in.

In the summer of 1976, Jean Simmons of KISS came to one of Van Halen's shows at Gazzari's. Simmons loved the band and had them make a demo, but KISS management turned the band down, believing they had "no chances of making it."

Van Halen later signed with Warner Brothers Records after a Warner A & R man saw the band at the Starwood in Hollywood. "Van Halen," the eponymous first album, was released on February 10, 1978 and reached #19 on the Billboard pop music charts.

The band toured for a year, opening for Black Sabbath, before their first hit single, "Dance the Night Away," was released from the Van Halen II album.

Van Halen earned \$1.5M for a 90-minute set at the 1983 US Festival and a place in the Guinness Book of World Records for "the highest-paid single appearance of a band."

"5150," released in 1986 with new singer Sammy Hagar, became the band's first Billboard #1 album.

The hits started coming. "Why Can't This Be Love" hit #3 on Billboard. "Dreams" and "Love Walks In" followed.

Van Halen was nominated for two 1992 Grammys, winning the "Best Hard Rock Performance with Vocal" award for the "For Unlawful Carnal" album.

But for the next 20 years there were long stretches of silence.

Now the hardest rocking band in America is back on tour.

Van Halen will play Staples Center in June. Tickets start at \$75.

CAMPUS



PURPLISH: Poly English teacher Evan Rabins (Left) and dancers (above) at teacher Lip Sync.

Lip Sync brings out the party animal in Parrot faculty.

SOUNDCHECK

IN SYNC

By Gabriela Melendez
Staff Writer

Parrots screamed as Poly faculty member Sergio Lopez sashayed around the room, lip syncing to Mana's "Me Vale." Once again, the young math teacher stole the show at the annual Teachers' Lip Sync, this one held in the blue gym.

Unable to resist, one student ran up and hugged Lopez while he sang, a hug Lopez rather clumsily accepted.

Teachers Mario Rivera, Hardip Singh and Manny Quinteros played band members of Mana, the Mexican Rolling Stones.

English teacher Evan Rabins, in a brilliant purple pimp suit with cheetah trim, started off the lip sync with a karaoke of the Jackson Five's "ABC." Rabins strode around the court like he owned it. Based on the Parrot cheers, I wouldn't deny it.

As a tribute to recently deceased 10th Grade Center counselor Steve Thatt, math teacher Royce Stuckey, dean Juan Campos and principal Ari Bennett rode around the court in a security golf cart, bobbing their heads to "What Is Love?" in a parody of Saturday Night Live's skit of the song. As simple as it was, this was my favorite performance.

Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time" became "Get One More Right" as English teachers Lisa Blackwell and Jeff Herrold sang about CAHSEE test prep tips instead of the original lyrics.

Faculty members Sara Rodrigues, Rabins, Monica Correa and Lilian Bonar held up posters reading "eliminate all wrong answers" or "take your time." The performance was creative and chuckle-worthy.

History teacher Kitt Heilbron worked her 3-inch aqua pumps while belting out "I Feel Like a Woman." Woodsman Glen Lamos shimmyed to "Hot! Hot! Hot!"

English teacher Erin Hunt sang that she was "Born This Way" in an outfit heavily influenced by Lady Gaga, the original singer on this ode to girl power.

Math teacher Gary Aragon rocked out to Cream's "Crossroads," accompanied by his cherry red electric guitar and a small amp, although his guitar was hard to hear at times.

MC and drama teacher Katy Groskin ended the lip sync with a bouncy "TGIF (Last Friday Night)."

The show was good, but it didn't outshine last year's.

TALK OF THE TOWN



From left: Math teacher Gary Aragon, History teacher Kitt Heilbron and Drama teacher Katy Groskin.

By Jasmine Aquino
Staff Writer

Who knew they had it in 'em? Poly party animals Lisa Jay, Narmeen Afarra, Irene Maliwan, Elidia Vazquez, Pia Damonte, Brad Katz and Glen Lamos, all in Hawaiian-themed outfits, got wild and crazy dancing to Buster Poindexter's "Hot! Hot! Hot!" at the annual Teachers' Lip Sync on February 24 held in the Blue Gym.

"The show was incredible. I love that all the teachers were so enthusiastic. It was contagious," said first-time audience member and freshman Vanessa Aquino.

Parrots in the audience laughed and pointed while the group danced around a party tent adorned with colorful Christmas lights. Moves such as Lamos' shoulder shimmy were never meant to see the light of day, but there they were just the same.

This year's theme was "Party," with all the acts tied together via a telephone conversation narrative that described "last night's party." As MC, lip sync newbie and drama teacher Katy Groskin "took the call."

English teacher Evan Rabins kicked off Act I, "Getting Ready for the Party," with a rendition of "ABC" followed by Leadership's Kitt Heilbron insisting "I Feel Like a Woman." Spotlights followed Heilbron as she pranced around the basketball court in blue heels.

Act II, "Dance at the Party," included first-time performer Gary Aragon doing lead guitar and vocals on Cream's "Crossroads."

Aragon restarted the song three times due to technical difficulties.

"The back-track was pre-recorded," Aragon said later, "and when they pushed the button, the song started in the middle."

But Aragon persisted, fingers blazing across his red Paul Reed Smith six-string, while the audience clapped along and waved glow sticks in true concert fashion.

"I had a lot of fun," Aragon said. "I am definitely going to do it every year from now on."

Math teacher Sergio Lopez, Poly's resident heartthrob, had the girls swooning, as usual, with a performance of Mana's "Me Vale." When Lopez took off his leather jacket, sighs turned to screams.

Royce Stuckey, whose leggy Beyonce cross-dressing gig raised the roof last year, settled for Haddaway's "What is Love?" this time around. Stuckey sported a suit jacket, jeans, and shades, but it just wasn't the same.

English teachers Lisa Blackwell and Jeff Herrold sang Cindy Lauper's 80s hit "Time After Time" but with new lyrics.

"I've had this idea for a while now," said Blackwell. "The parts that I sang, I wrote. The parts that Herrold sang, he wrote."

The lyrics were a CAHSEE pep talk. Blackwell and several other Poly teachers sat in desks while "taking the CAHSEE" but mostly held up a series of signs with test-taking tips.

A pajama-clad Groskin ended the show with Katy Perry's "TGIF (Last Friday Night)" to much applause.

Former Parrot faculty member Amy Showalter-Schwal, another 2011 lip sync sensation, helped Groskin close the show with a last "phone call."

The box office pulled in nearly \$800, which will be used to buy snacks for tenth graders during their CAHSEE testing on March 13 and 14.

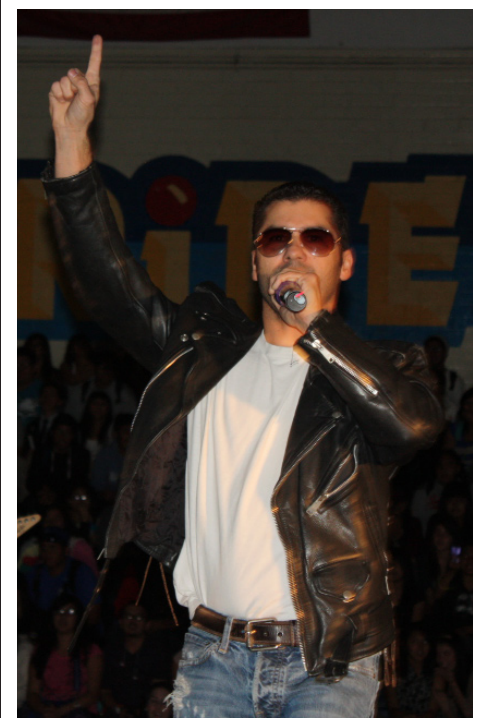


Photo by Diane Alvarado
HEART-THROB: Poly math teacher Sergio Lopez sings Mana's "Me Vale."

All photos by
Diane Alvarado

CAMPUS

Aca Deca

[From Boxer to Block, Front Page]

Gold.

Block said he'll get tickets for everyone to the Super Quiz Relay Saturday and the awards ceremony Sunday.

Parents say that they are very proud of their kids. They also say that their kids have been putting a lot of work for Aca Deca, studying every day and late into the night.

"Hopefully everybody will be here bright and early to celebrate with awards and trophies," Block said. "The team members have been working very hard, coming into the room and studying on their own."

Block says this is the hardest-working team he's ever had.

"They come together in the classroom and they work in the classroom as a team. Most teams, I usually have a few players who don't really work as hard as the others. But everyone is studying. They all want to do well at state and they all feel they have a very good chance."

Blocks says team members come in after school and stay till 6 or 7 p.m. Most of the team members have been putting in an additional three hours right after the school day. Three members are on the track team and can't attend all study sessions.

Block says team members are successful because they are dedicated.

"I can't make a student study or make them want to go to state," Block said. "The students that make the team are the students that want it the most."

"They are not always the brightest students," Block said. "They are not always the students I would have selected. I was surprised with about half the students on the team this year. I probably would not have selected them if I would have made the cut off."

Block says team members "self-select."

"If you want it, if you are going to show up every day," Block said. "If you push yourself, you have the opportunity to make the final team. These are the guys who work the hardest and I could not be happier for them."

Landfill

[From Landfill, Front Page]

aqueducts is released and enters the soil, replenishing San Fernando Valley ground water, according to a state report.

Evidence of a leak between the DWP facility and the landfill, according to the report, meant "disposal of any liquid at this site may have a detrimental effect on the usable water."

Making the problem worse, the soil beneath the Sheldon-Arleta landfill is porous and gravelly, allowing pollutants to migrate away from the site. The landfill was built on a formerly gravel pit, the report said.

In 1992, the City of Los Angeles determined that influx of water beneath the former landfill from adjacent water spreading basins caused the migration of landfill gas onto school property.

In 1993, the Bureau of Sanitation (BOS) assumed responsibility for the monitoring and control of landfill gas, including methane, at PolysStudents

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, landfill gas, including methane, infiltrated the boys and girls gyms at Poly, according to Hamilton.

During this time, Poly faculty, staff and students voiced concerns about landfill emissions and bad odors coming from the landfill as well as a perceived high incidence of cancer victims on Poly's campus.

In a public hearing of the state Senate Natural Resources Committee held at Poly in October 1999, former counselor Sylvia Brown cited 38 cases of cancer among past and current faculty.

"Over the years you could smell the odors from the landfill," said former Poly dean Jerry Cord, a teacher and coach at the school for 33 years. "I was always told the toxins were not a problem and methane [gas] was not a problem, but in the 1980s a baseball player got bone marrow cancer and died," he said.

Cord died of cancer in 2000.

Parrot writes for Post

[From Former OPTIMIST, Front Page]

about anything under the sun"—works at News Corporation headquarters at 1211 Avenue of the Americas in Manhattan, the Post's parent company. Oliveira lives in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, a 15-minute drive from the Post's 45-floor headquarters.

Oliveira attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison on a full scholarship from the Posse Foundation from 2006-2010, majoring in Journalism and Portuguese. His knowledge of Portuguese helps with his reporting.

"MY FATHER, WHEN HE WAS FAIRLY YOUNG, USED TO RUN A NEWSPAPER CHALLENGING THE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP IN BRAZIL. THAT WAS AN INSPIRATION I ALWAYS KEPT IN THE BACK OF MY HEAD"

"In fact, as of this writing, I'm headed to a superior court trial in New Jersey where all the defendants are Portuguese speakers," Oliveira said. "Speaking their language has helped me get some great info that I wouldn't have otherwise."

Oliveira was one of the youngest staffers at the U of Wisconsin's "Badger Herald," one of the largest independent student newspapers in the nation.

"Badger Herald" staff are paid through advertising revenue. The paper receives no financial assistance from the university itself.

"I started as a page designer and reporter," Oliveira said. "I was promoted to campus editor, deputy news editor and eventually news editor—when I ran the largest section in the paper. At the end of my sophomore year, I was offered a full-time reporting job at a daily in Janesville, Wisconsin—so I left the Herald and started my professional career."

Oliveira's stories for the "Herald" ranged from state government and crime to scientific research development. As news editor, he managed a team of a couple dozen editors and reporters during the 2008 election. (He wrote a couple hundred stories for his school newspaper.

Journalism wasn't Oliveira's first career choice.

"For the first part of my life, I was going back and forth between a few things—from a career in math to piano performance," Oliveira

said.

His father's journalism work and his own work on the Poly OPTIMIST and the "Badger Herald" inspired him to try a career in journalism.

"My father, when he was fairly young, used to run a newspaper challenging the military dictatorship in Brazil. That was an inspiration I always kept in the back of my head, and when that time came, I decided I wanted to do something similar," he said.

"What really got me excited was working for the Poly OPTIMIST and eventually my college newspaper," he added.

Oliveira attended Poly from spring 2005 to June 2006.

"I met some of the most influential people of my life there," Oliveira said. "Ethel Matlen [current AP English Language teacher] was amazing in getting my English up to speed and jump-starting my career in journalism. Current OPTIMIST advisor John Blau helped me with my news writing. Mr. Kevin Patterson, who ran Poly's choirs a few years back, is still a great friend of mine."

Oliveira helped revive the OPTIMIST and served as Matlen's editor-in-chief.

"I worked as the first design director and editor-in-chief of the OPTIMIST when it first came back after a few year's hiatus," he said.

Oliveira still reads the OPTIMIST, he says. "The OPTIMIST is an award-winning publication and a golden training ground for future journalists. It's a great place to try different sections and beats, to make mistakes and learn. Mr. Blau, the current adviser, worked at the "Los Angeles Times" and has an incredible amount of journalism knowhow."

Oliveira offered advice to current Poly OPTIMIST staff members or anyone interested in pursuing a career in journalism.

"Write. That's the only thing I can tell you. Don't be afraid of taking chances and making mistakes. Professional journalists still make them all the time. The important thing is trying, trying and then trying again."

Soccer Coach Fired

[From Poly Girls, Front Page]

"and we reached out to the soccer team as well."

McEwen said she talked to the girls' varsity soccer team but wouldn't comment on what they talked about.

All coaches are finger printed, Bennett said. "If they have anything on their files, generally that will come out," Bennett said.

"We also do the interview and call the references that they give and so we talk to the other people that they have worked with and so there is a process that is set in place to try to prevent things like this."

"Unfortunately, in that screening process, there is nothing to alert us a situation like this," Bennett said.

After being finger printed downtown, the District does a background check on each applicant to make sure he or she doesn't have any outstanding felonies and any issues regarding child abuse, Bennett said.

McEwen said she is in constant contact with all coaches, including walk-ons.

"I talked to him two or three times a week," McEwen said. "Any coach would come in to sign add forms for new players or to discuss

fundraising. Plus as the athletic director, I have everyone's email. I do a lot of emailing to coaches all the time so we had a lot of contact but no different than any other coach. No more or less."

Poly's girls soccer team was 8-4 in 2010-11 under Alvarez, finishing second to Verdugo Hills, but 3-6 this year, finished 6th in the East Valley League, just ahead of winless Sun Valley.



Photo by Diane Alvarado

SOCCER: Walk on coach Jose Alvarez.



MEDIA

BEST MUSIC YOU'VE NEVER HEARD

By Lisa Guardado
Staff Writer

The OPTIMIST looks at 2011 Grammy winners heard by few.



R&B

R&B Best R&B Performance
Corinne Bailey Rae
"Is This Love"

Brit singer-songwriter Corinne Bailey Rae was only the fourth female British singer in history to have her first album debut at number one. Rae started singing in her church groups and studied English Lit at the University of Leeds, but a part time job got her interested in jazz.

On Bob Marley's "Is This Love," Rae's smooth voice blends perfectly with the slow reggae arrangement. Marley's soul becomes smooth R&B under Rae's mellow but nuanced vocal stylings. Not to be missed.

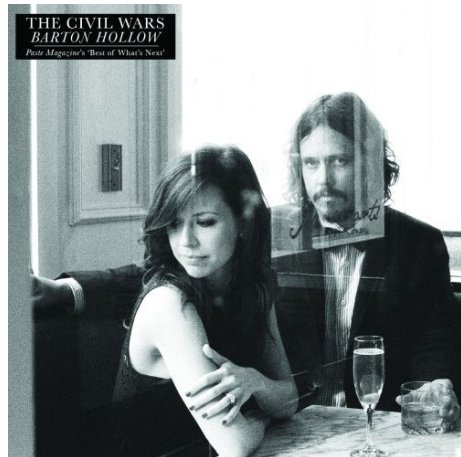


Pop

Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album
Tony Bennett & Various Artists
"Duets II"

Bennett, 85, is known for his recordings of the classic American Standards songbook as well as show tunes and jazz. This second "Duets" album features vocal partners Lady Gaga with "The Lady is a Tramp" and songwriter/singer/ace guitarist John Mayer with "One for My Baby."

Lots of experimenting with his own style as well as blending with other artists and their voices on this one. In his spare time, by the way, Bennett paints under the name Benedetto.

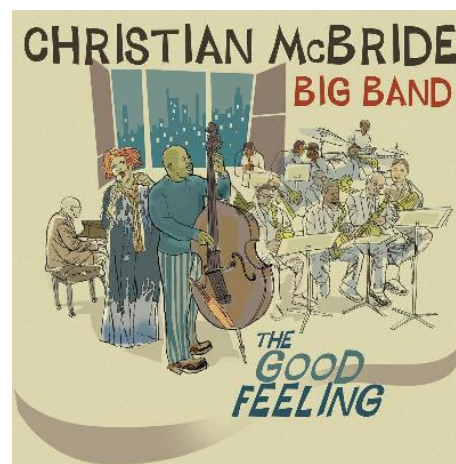


Country

Best Country Duo/Group Performance
The Civil Wars
"Barton Hollow"

Singer-songwriters Joy Williams and John Paul White met in Nashville in 2008 and started working together immediately. They've appeared on The Tonight Show, played at the Sundance Film Festival and toured the UK with singer Adele.

"Barton Hollow," their debut LP, was also named Best Folk Album. Crystal-pure harmonies and crisp acoustic guitar work color songs like "I Got This Friend" and "My Father's Father." The Civil Wars' fresh new sound and soft romantic melodies are refreshingly original. Plan to fall in love with their sound.

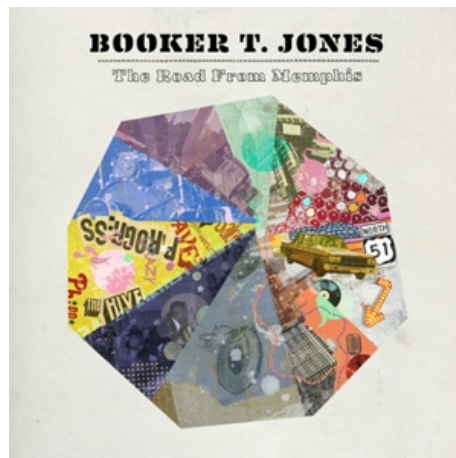


Jazz

Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album
Christian McBride Big Band
"The Good Feeling"

By the time he was 40, McBride had played on nearly 300 recordings as a sideman, everything from hip-hop to pop, soul to classical. McBride is also co-director of the new National Jazz Museum in Harlem.

The star of this effort is clearly McBride's arranging work, his first with a big band. The result is a swinging affair, traditional in tone and generously sonic. Vocalist Melissa Walker sings on a few numbers, while tracks like "Brother Mister" and "The Shade of The Cedar Tree" send you back in time to a 1920's jazz hall. McBride's bass is confident and solid as usual. "Good Feeling" is the right title.

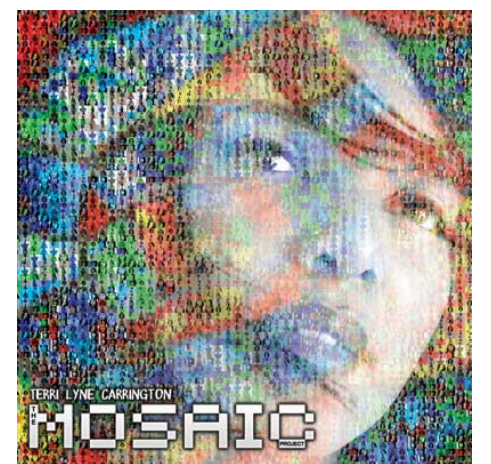


Instrumental

Best Instrumental Album
Booker T. Jones
"The Road From Memphis"

Jones, 66, was born in Memphis. In this new solo album, he goes back to Memphis and his R & B roots for a heavy helping soul/funk. Jones was 17 and still in high school when he recorded the classic "Green Onions," with his now well-known Hammond B-3 organ sound.

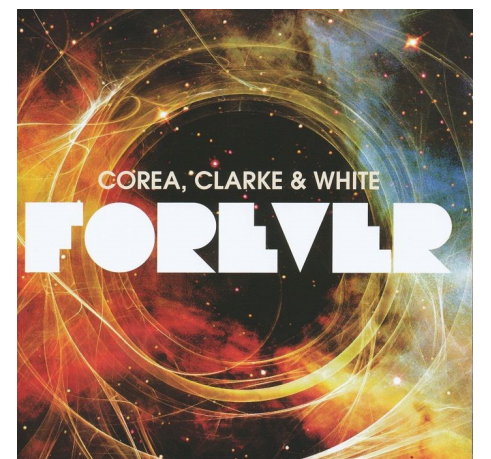
Roots drummer Ahmir Thompson, part of the house band on "Late Night With Jimmy Fallon," co-produced and played on the album, which includes a Jones vocal on "Down In Memphis" and a nice jazz/funk version of Gnarls Barkley's "Crazy." "The Road to Memphis" brings new meaning to "groovy."



Best Jazz Vocal Album
Terri Lyne Carrington & various artists
"The Mosaic Project"

Grammy Award-winning jazz drummer, composer and record producer Carrington produced and arranged the all-female recording that includes Dianne Reeves, pianist Geri Allen, vocalist Cassandra Wilson, bassist Esperanza Spalding, Gretchen Parlato and Nona Hendryx. The cover art is composed of hundreds of tiny photos of the women.

Carrington, 47, spent over 20 years on the road, playing with jazz greats like Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Al Jarreau and Stan Getz. This recording is her fifth.



Best Jazz Instrumental
Corea, Clarke & White
"Forever"

Corea was at the forefront of the electric jazz fusion movement in the 60's. Introduced to the piano at age four and the drums at eight, he was soon drawn to be pop.

Clarke, born in Philadelphia, is well known for his innovative and influential work on double bass and electric bass.

Jazz fusion drummer Lenny White worked in Corea's band, Return to Forever.

The album's two discs feature Corea's Italian and Spanish roots on display with Hispanic tunes such as "La Cancion de Sophia," "Senior Mouse" and "Armando's Rhumba." Corea's keyboard skills in "Captain Marvel" sound great with White's driving drum work.

TELEVISION

Stylish drama is back

The Emmy award-winning cable series "Mad Men" returns for a fifth season of high-fashion drama at the Sterling Cooper agency.

By Shean Santy
Staff Writer

The critically-acclaimed "Mad Men" quickly became a basic cable must-watch, an instant cult hit that made Don Draper the "cool guy" of television. The show's historical authenticity and visually stunning portrayal of the 1960s clicked with older audiences. But even some younger demographics appreciated a television show that re-enacts history with style and an eye for detail.

After a lengthy delay, executive producer Matthew Wiener's highly stylized retro drama is back for a fifth season. Don Draper (Jon Hamm), creative director at an advertising agency, takes up where he left off, troubled and restless, with the changing moods and attitude of the 1960s in the background.

Other main characters include the former Mrs. Draper, Betty Francis (January Jones), who had a struggling relationship with Draper while the secretary at the agency, and Peggy

Olson (Elisabeth Moss), the gem of the show. The supporting cast includes Roger Sterling (John Slattery), senior partner of the agency, Joan Holloway (Christina Hendricks) and Peter Campbell (Vincent Kartheiser).

"Mad Men's" careful and detailed staging of the mood of the sixties, from the counterculture era to the radical change of society towards racism, has entered the popular culture. "Mad Men"-themed parties are springing up in offices all across America.

For those just joining the series, catching up is highly recommended. All four past seasons are available on DVD and stream on Netflix.

AMC's strong lineup includes "Breaking Bad," "The Killing" and "The Walking Dead." But "Mad Men" is the show that legitimized AMC. The basic cable hit is slick, cool and Don Draper is the MAN.



SPORTS

Tennis Opens 4-1

Junior Andy Choi leads the way as #1 singles for veteran coach Brian Block's squad.

By Jessica Gonzalez
Staff Writer

Decisive 6-1 wins over Fairfax and Reseda and forfeits by Sherman Oaks and Marshall contributed to an easy 4-1 preseason for Poly boys' tennis, the only loss coming in a 7-0 defeat at El Camino on Monday.

"I was very pleased with our team's strong performance," says Poly head coach Brian Block.

The Parrots will open their regular season against North Hollywood on Thursday.

"Andy Choi, our number one singles player, has been working very hard teaching our newer players' basic strokes and techniques," said Block. "Andy's efforts, both as a player, and a teacher, were the decisive factor in our early success."

"I was also pleased with how strong our 'AP' players looked. Academics come first, and we have several players who cannot practice regularly with the team because of AP class conflicts during 4th and 5th period. While there was some rust for these players, they all looked very strong."

"I was especially impressed with the mental toughness of our singles players, who all appeared able to outthink their opponents. Our only loss occurred when I called a match because one of our players had leg cramps with the score tied 1 set apiece. He wanted to continue, but I didn't want to take a chance of losing him for an extended stretch of the season. He's probably still upset with me calling the match, but it wasn't worth the risk. I had never seen him play as strong and intelligently. I am anticipating another strong season from this year's tennis team."

QUOTES

"In last year's playoff game, we came very close to winning the league to go to playoffs," said coach Brian Block. "I got coached by the other coach, who was very picky about match ups. One student was taking an AP test that day. He was very rigid."

"As a result one of our singles players had to play four games in a row. He ran out of steam and we lost the playoff by a single point."

"This year's singles, top to bottom, could be the best players Poly has. Many have private lessons. Whether this team will make it to playoffs will depend on how fast they are willing to learn."

"At practice, we work on serves. If you don't have a good serve, you will not win. A solid serve is the key to success in tennis."



Photo by Diane Alvarado

TENNIS: Parrot #1 singles Andy Choi beat Fairfax 2 & 1 and Reseda 2 & 0.

Cheer Taps Former Parrot as New Coach

By Sandy Barba
Staff Writer

Christina Garcia, Poly class of '96 and former Parrot cheerleader, is Poly's new cheer coach. The OPTIMIST recently asked Garcia about her new post. Here's what she said.

What do you hope to accomplish as Poly's new cheer coach?

Building the cheerleader's reputation up again. I know there's been some negative backlash so hopefully we'll reverse that. We'll get the cheerleaders prepared, showing that we're great and that they work hard and we're here to support all our teams and the community and to compete.

What are your plans for now?

We're getting ready for the spring pep rally. Right now we're working really hard to get a performance ready and obviously cheering for the spring sports like baseball, softball, volleyball and track.

We're also going to a summer camp where the girls learn some new cheers and dance routines for events and half times. And we'll get ready for competition and fundraising.

How was cheering at Poly?

It was the highlight of my high



Photo by Diane Alvarado

COACH: Christina Garcia.

school experience. We were involved with everything that had to do with sports and school spirit. It was awesome, that's why I came back, because I have so many fond memories of cheerleading. I was very excited when they told me that they needed somebody to come in and help out with cheerleading. So I have nothing but great memories.

I want what I had for them. When I found out about their situation, I was very sad to hear that and it made me want to help them. Especially for the seniors; I mean, I wish they would have had a better cheerleading experience because for some of them, this is it.

How has Poly changed since you were here?

Well, a lot of buildings that are here now weren't here when I came. And the sports teams have been built up and are doing well. The outlook is completely different from what I remember.

The cheer stunting is so much more advanced compared to when I came here. They're doing more complicated stunts. I know that in 2010 they won state champions. We never did that back in the day. Competition-wise, they're upper level.

Has cheer evolved since you participated?

Absolutely. The stunts are so much more complex and it's so difficult in general, so it's a great accomplishment. The girls are flipping and doing twists and turns up in the air. The high school level is looking like college level.

Where were you born?

I was born in Sun Valley and grew up in the Valley. I went to Arminta Elementary School, Sun Valley Middle School. I graduated from Poly in 1996.

I majored in kinesiology at CSUN. I'm a P.E. teacher.

Marquez Pitches 3-0 Shutout

3rd baseman Rodriguez leads Parrot offense.

By Maria Valles
Staff Writer

Poly senior Phillip Marquez put the clamps on visiting NoHo bats, pitching a three-hit shutout and going the distance for a 3-0 win in the Parrot's season opener. Marquez had five Ks and gave up two walks.

"We answered the call today," said Parrot head coach Gabe Cerna.

"Now it's back to work at 6 a.m. in the weight room, have a good practice and play hard on Friday."

Parrot junior third baseman Fabian Rodriguez had a double and knocked in two runs to lead the Poly offense. Poly bunched its three runs in the bottom of the second inning.

The Huskies' sophomore Andrew Marmor took the loss.

The Parrots (3-6) travel to North Hollywood (7-3) Friday, looking for a two-game sweep.



Photo by Diane Alvarado

DIRTY WORK: Parrot junior Fabian Rodriguez is tagged out at third.

Volleyball Takes Two

Boys varsity blanks Barristers, Cavaliers.

By Shean Santy
Staff Writer

Poly vs Marshall 3-0 = 25-22, 25-13, 25-18 at Poly Monday

Prime Time Players:

Francisco Xavier Montalvan: 4 aces, 3 blocks, 8 assists
Kevin Avelar: 3 aces, 9 kills, 4 blocks, 8 assists and 9 digs
Luis Garcia: 5 blocks
Eugenio Moreno: 2 aces and 22 digs
Ruben Jimenez: 2 aces, 7 kills and 6 digs

Poly defeats Cleveland 3-0 = 25-18, 25-21, 25-14 at Poly. Thursday

Prime Time Players:

Francisco Xavier Montalvan: 3 aces, 22 assists and 7 digs
Kevin Avelar: 1 ace, 14 kills, 1 block, 9 assists and 10 digs
Luis Garcia: 6 kills and 2 blocks
Eugenio Moreno: 19 digs
Ruben Jimenez: 10 kills and 11 digs

"We have two games next week and a big tournament the following weekend in San Diego," said assistant coach Melissa Gillard. "We will be competing against higher level schools, so we will see what we need to work on to succeed and get a championship title."

"The boys have a lot of potential and athleticism. Their capabilities and passion for the game will get them far."

Maxpreps Player of the Week:

Kevin Avelar led his team against both Marshall and Cleveland (non-league games) with a total of 23 kills, 17 assists, 19 digs, 5 blocks, and 4 aces. Outstanding offensive and defensive performance.