

The Poly Optimist

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School

VOL. XCVIII, No. 5

SERVING THE POLY COMMUNITY SINCE 1913

DECEMBER 2012

Michael Jackson Redux

Senior Alexis Campos put the talent in talent show.

By Yesenia Carretero & Rudy Guijarro
Staff Writers

Senior Alexis Campos' electrifying dance steps and gestures at Leadership's Tuesday talent showcase were as close to Michael Jackson as any Parrot will ever get.

Campos' dazzling recreation had the Parrot crowd screaming like tweeners.

"I didn't expect that reaction," Campos said. "I thought some people weren't going to like it."

Campos' performance of Jackson's 1995 hit "Scream" was marred only by a malfunctioning mic, spoiling the crowd's enjoyment of his vocals.

Jackson's version was a duet with sister Janet. Campos had sophomore Maria Romero set to do Janet's part but she didn't perform.

"She dropped out the day before because she felt pressure," said Campos, "I don't blame her though. I understand."

Juniors Crystal Cruz, Lillian Valencia, and Kasandra Rodriguez looked great together on Brenda Lee's 1957 hit "Jingle Bell Rock," especially on the well-handled and clever dance routine. Their voices were also a good match. Their performance, based on the 2004 movie "Mean Girls," even included a bit where the music stopped.

Freshmen Danny Gaono, Jason Lara and junior DeAnthony Hawkins traded dubstep routines to Skrillex 2011 hit "First of the Year."

Freshman Naekisha Pick has a nice voice but Jill Scott's 2007 "Hate on Me" was not the right vehicle to showcase it.

Junior April Ocampo sometimes found the melody and sometimes missed it as she worked her way through teen sensation Justin Bieber's "Die in Your Arms."

Junior Araxi Derderian sang Selena Gomez's "Rock God" (2010).

The lunch bell left senior Yesenia Estrada in the wings waiting to perform Kelly Clarkson's 2005 hit "Because of You."

The proceedings were rather haphazardly MC'd by seniors Khrista Abasi and Victor Sanchez, who apparently didn't know the acts well enough to work without cheat sheets.

The bare-bones production was coordinated by leadership's Abasi and senior Josselyn Lopez.



Photos by Tracy Salcido

THRILLER: Parrots could be forgiven for mistaking senior Alexis Campos for 80s icon Michael Jackson at the Leadership Talent Show Tuesday.

Opportunity In a Room at Poly

New Parrot behavior modification program offers a second chance.

By Rudy Guijarro
Staff Writer

Poly has a new in-house behavior modification program aimed at improving support for students with issues detrimental to themselves and others.

Ninth Grade Center Coordinator Lourdes De

Santiago is in charge of the program, which was developed in response to a LAUSD initiative called the Positive Behavior Support Plan.

Poly's program, known as the Opportunity Room, began in February. At that time, suspension rates were at an all-time high.

"We needed to do something about the suspension rates," said De Santiago, "because part of the Positive Behavior Support Plan was incorporating a program that would mitigate our high suspension rate."

Poly's behavior modification program was designed to fit the school's needs.

"We focused on what the Opportunity Room would look like and what we

[See Opportunity, pg 6]

Strong Showing at Scrimmage

Parrots beat Taft, Van Nuys and Pacific Palisades, finishing 11th out of 60 schools.

By Yesenia Carretero
Staff Writer

Poly's Academic Decathlon squad finished second in a scrimmage with nine other LAUSD teams at North Hollywood High on November 17.

"I was very happy to see that our team got higher than Taft, Van Nuys, and Pacific Palisades," veteran Poly Aca Deca coach Brian Block said. "Last year those schools finished higher than our team."

Sixty LAUSD schools competed at six different sites, with Poly placing 11th overall.

Last year, the Parrot team finished third at site and 13th overall and made state.

In terms of points, last year's team got 20 more questions correct out of about 2,000. In terms of place, this year's team scored two places higher. But comparisons are difficult because subjects change from year to year.

The scrimmage is for practice, but results are a strong indicator of a team's competitive advantage.

The scrimmage helps a team identify strengths and weaknesses and plan areas for study over the remaining nine weeks.

"This year's team is strongest in music and economics," Block said. "The team's weakest subjects are science and history."

In the past three years, LA Uni-

fied has sent teams placing 10th, 12th and 13th in the scrimmage to the state competition.

"Finishing eleventh means we have a great chance of going to state with a little more hard work," Block said.

Individual student scores are available immediately after the scrimmage, but school scores are sent out a week later.

"The top school at the scrimmage was Franklin," Block said. "The Franklin coach has the last period of the school day for his team to study. And every summer they spend a week at a house owned by alumni in the mountains. Parents help with

[See Strong, pg 6]

Elves at Work

Poly's annual toy drive is in full swing for the holidays.

By Nam Woo
Staff Writer

Poly's Leadership elves are hard at work on their annual Toy Drive and doing what they hope to do a lot of - count money.

"We've collected \$10,700 from the community since August for the toy drive," said Leadership sponsor Brian LeClair.

LeClair is quick to stress that Leadership has no monopoly on the Christmas spirit of giving.

"The whole school is welcome to participate in the toy drive," Le Clair said.

Leadership started collecting money from teacher classrooms on November 27 and will continue until December 12.

"We send envelopes to teachers and the teachers and the students then fill the envelopes," said Le Clair. "Sometimes there is 50 cents in an envelope, sometimes there might be \$50."

Last year Leadership collected \$23,000, the year before that \$12,000.

Leadership buys the toys and turns them over to the LA fire department. LAFD distributes the toys to families, orphanages, and anywhere toys are needed.

"I've done the toy drive for 18 years," Le Clair said, "but the toy drive itself started in 1958."

[See Toy Drive, pg 6]

Band Takes First Place

By Jasmine Aquino
Staff Writer

Poly's marching band, percussion and colorguard won awards for their "Les Misérables" field show at the 30th Annual Highlander Marching Band Competition November 10 at Granada Hills Charter High School.

First place trophies went to the band and auxiliary (Colorguard) and a second place drumhead was given to the percussion (drumline).

"This was such a great start for the competition season," said senior drum major Martha Tinajero. "But our work is just beginning. The district finals are in two weeks and we have so much more we can still improve."

The band was placed in Division 5 with competitors Santa Paula High School and St. Genevieve High School.

"Our biggest competitor of the night was, however, the weather," said Tinajero. "Since we performed in the evening, the winds were strong and freezing, making it hard on the musician's hands and difficult for the Colorguard to have control over their flags, but we managed."

The band arrived at Granada six hours before their performance. At noon, band members began breathing exercises in front of the band room while the drumline

began to setup.

"The breathing exercises prepare the wind players for practice and performing," said Tinajero, "but it also helps them relax before an intense competition."

The band ran through their show on the football field a few times for practice, then headed back to the band room to eat, put on their uniforms and load the U-Haul with the drumline equipment.

The band headed back to the bus after the performance and changed into warmer clothes to watch the remaining bands compete.

At nine that evening, Assistant Drum Major Diana Escobedo, drumline's Drum Captain Jasmine Aquino and Colorguard Co-Captains Natalia Aparicio and Elisama Miguel accompanied Tinajero to the field for the awards ceremony.

The five stood amongst the other school drum majors for about an hour in the cold night air and performed their salute for Granada drum majors after each award was announced for Poly.

Poly's band is now preparing for their next competition, the LAUSD Championships on December 8. A division change for Poly will mean new competitors, including North Hollywood High and Van Nuys High.

The band won the first place banner at last year's competition.



Photo by Vanessa Aquino

Ingredients For Success

These Parrots are cooking up change.

FOOD - page 5



Google Image

We Pick the Flicks

Quick looks at 2012's best films.

FILM - page 7

OPINION

EDITORIAL

GUEST EDITORIAL

Why the Pilot Model is Best

After over a year of research, exploration, and discussion, many Poly teachers have concluded the Pilot model grants us the most significant local control and freedom from suffering district mandates. The process has been time consuming, particularly given the initial lack of direction from LAUSD and UTLA.

The Pilot model is superior based on two critical factors: control to restore our Balanced Traditional Calendar, and access to all the funds generated by the attendance of our students (over \$900,000 this year alone). Losing this funding is the price we pay for being in a large district – as our students outperform the median attendance rate, the district withholds the difference to subsidize schools with poorer attendance. The Pilot model restores this funding and allows us to choose the calendar that works for our students.

The Pilot model includes an Elect to Work Agreement (EWA), which allows teachers to transfer out at the end of the year, and permits the school to ask teachers to transfer. The Pilot model lets us dictate precisely how the EWA works, including placing power in the hands of teachers and stipulating that the principal receives evaluation by the faculty. In short, there are more protections and checks and balances under the EWA than we currently enjoy.

Furthermore, the EWA provides a framework for teachers to agree on how to help our students. In the words of Spider-Man (typically portrayed as a high school student), “With great power comes great responsibility.” If we are to have control over our site, it is only right we agree how to exercise that

control. The current teacher-written draft of the EWA specifies that teachers will perform research-proven practices already outlined in our WASC accreditation plan, such as creating and administering common assessments, collaborating to analyze the student data from those assessments, and partnering with our colleagues to support our students by planning lessons to target standards identified by that data.

Some teachers may question if all this is necessary, and argue the district surely won’t meddle with one of its highest performing schools – but the district already has. LAUSD mandated the district-wide calendar, despite how our Balanced Traditional Calendar supported credit recovery and raised our graduation rate. The district dictated algebra placement based on a district assessment, despite the hard work and commitment of our Algebra teachers in developing a more analytical screening tool to move the system at the pace of the students, instead of forcing students to move at the pace of the system. Already the district is formulating mandated Common Core curriculum – what will be next?

Adopting this model will depend upon a vote of the UTLA members. Some teachers may succumb to vague fears or initial apprehensions and reject the process without participating in the design. Instead, I encourage all teachers to join the teacher-led drafting group and ensure the Pilot application serves our students and us.

Jeff Herrold
Member, UTLA House of Representatives



the OPTIMIST
VOL XCVIII No. 5
DECEMBER

3 WHEN BLACK FRIDAY COMES
Every year Christmas comes sooner and costs more. Our editorial staff decided to look a little harder for the true meaning of Christmas.
By OPTIMIST editorial staff

4 PARROTS GET BASIC TRAINING
The U.S. Army gave Parrots a work out, an intelligence test and a simulated helicopter ride on a recent one-day visit to Poly’s campus
By Alfredo Quezada

4 AFTER HOURS AT THE ARCADE
Wreck-it Ralph runs amuck in this Disney Animation Studios look back at the golden age of arcade games.
By Maureen Kang

4 SAD SACK
Stephen Chbosky’s debut novel, “The Perks of Being a Wallflower,” echoes the same themes found in J.D. Salinger’s “Catcher in the Rye.”
By Lisa Guardado

5 RECIPE FOR SUCCESS
Parrot cooks in Chef Higgins’ class will be cooking at the White House if they can come up with the winning recipe for “Cooking Up Change.”
By Rudy Guijarro

6 VARIETY PAC
Rock band Muse has a new record out and it’s not what their fans expected. This mashup of genres has some calling bravo and some calling foul.
By Adrianna Garcia

6 A NEW ERA
Apple is no longer Steve Jobs’ personal kingdom and the Silicon giant seems to hit some bumps in the road as tablet and smartphone competition heat up.
By Heidy Reyes

7 FOR YOUR VIEWING PLEASURE
Here’s a year-end top ten that can help you spend your money wisely - ten films that will have you on the edge of your seat or take you to another place.
By Adrianna Garcia

8 A NEW FACE
Poly’s new varsity basketball boys head coach Alan Woskanian has high hopes and a fast break offense waiting in the wings.
By Sport Staff

8 SPEED KILLS
Veteran varsity girls basketball coach Tremeka Batiste will put a more experienced team on the floor this year and promises run and gun excitement.
By Sport Staff

8 THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT
Poly boys soccer coach Rafael Loza says this year’s team is the shortest he’s ever had but says this year’s team can pass with the best of them.
By Alfredo Quezada

Political Awareness for Parrots

Almost every student at Poly was unable to vote in the 2012 Presidential Election due to age, but that does not deprive students of being informed. Elections are now over and Barack Obama has been re-elected as president, leaving him in office for another four years to help our country’s poor state.

Students at Poly don’t pay taxes. Students at Poly don’t have to worry about paying for health insurance. Students at Poly don’t worry much about Supreme Court officials.

In a few years, however, Poly students will no longer be Poly students. Poly students will become adult citizens of the United States, capable of driving, working, and voting.

Those years aren’t too far from now and Obama will still be in office by the time every student at Poly now graduates. All the issues that didn’t matter before will suddenly matter.

Make them matter now. Understand the issues now. Some, in fact, affect you right now.

President Obama’s main foundation to help foster growth of this nation is using the government.

Obama has formed sensible budget policies designed to help the lower classes, not protect the powerful. During his next four years in office, he has many plans to continue the “change.”

President Obama has successfully made the most reforms

since the 1965 passage of Medicare and Medicaid. These reforms have fully supported the uninsured with many benefits. Children under 26 can stay on their parents’ health care policies, people with Medicare who are heavy users of prescription drugs pay less and free immunizations, mammograms and contraceptives are available to all.

President Obama saved the economy from another Great Depression when he took office in January 2009. His efforts created and preserved 2.5 million jobs and prevented the unemployment rate from reaching 12 percent.

President Obama and his administration have been successful in their foreign affairs efforts. He led the killing of Al Qaeda’s leader, Osama Bin Laden, and ended the war in Iraq. He exercised military restraint and helped restore America’s bad reputation in other countries.

Although President Obama’s 2008 election did not cause a new post-racial era, his 2012 election has sparked marriage-equality movements around the country.

As Poly students continue to grow and ready themselves for adulthood, they need to learn how to be aware of the things that matter in their lives, including politics.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Yenifer Rodriguez

SPORTS EDITORS

Felicia Rodriguez
Tracy Salcido

PHOTO EDITORS

Vanessa Aquino
Daniel Castro
Tracy Salcido

WRITERS

Jeannette Buenrostro
Yesenia Carretero
Adriana Garcia
Lisa Guardado
Rudy Guijarro
Miguel Gutierrez
Maureen Kang

Alfredo Quezada
Catherine Ramos
Heidy Reyes
Yenifer Rodriguez
Celeste Salazar
Tracy Salcido
Nam Woo

CARTOONIST

Sherwin Santy

OPTIMIST ADVISOR

John Blau



John H. Francis Polytechnic High School
12431 Roscoe Blvd, Sun Valley, CA, 91352
<http://polyhigh.org>

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the Editor must be typed or printed in ink and include the writer’s signature. The OPTIMIST reserves the right to edit submissions. Send letters to Rm.14 or Mr. Blau’s box.

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.

CHRISTMAS EDITORIALS

Christmas Then and Now

As a kid the word, "Christmas" meant presents, presents and presents.

Cookies, candy canes, pie and all those sugared treats were the number one reason why waking up on Christmas day was such a delight.

Of course, as a kid, Christmas was such a blood-tingling holiday because of an old man with a white beard and a round belly. The one and only, Santa Claus.

Seeing him on Christmas as a kid was probably the most fortunate thing in the world, even if it was just your parents dressed up as jolly old St. Nick.

Singing Christmas songs and watching How The Grinch Stole Christmas was one of the top to do's on Christmas Eve. Getting ready for the real deal sent chills down ones spine.

How about the excitement that ran through your body when you were sitting on your living room floor and your little hands would

quickly open every present with your name on it.

That feeling of being intoxicated with happiness once a toy would reveal itself under all the wrapping paper was unforgettable. And no one can forget the disappointment you'd feel once you opened a present and it was a pair of pants.

Throwing clothes off to the side was a skill all kids mastered.

Nevertheless, Christmas as a child was merry and enjoyable.

Celebrating Christmas for years and years on end has never become dull, simply because presents are never a negative concept. But when you're a 17 or an 18 year old toys kind of lose their spark.

Receiving Christmas presents as a teen is still utterly exciting, of course, it just isn't the main reason why we wake up in a joyful mood the day of.

Parents also start buying you less things

simply because you don't want anything anymore or what you do want is too expensive.

Santa Claus? Mom, dad, please stop.

Christmas stops being about Santa Claus and more about family, friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, and of course, food. No one can ever forget food.

Mouth watering tamales are always the best to eat during Christmas. Eating until you can't move will always be the number one goal during Christmas.

Giving gifts starts becoming fun. Wasting money never felt so good, especially since it's being wasted on a person you love or care about.

Hanging out with family is not such a hassle anymore because the energy around the room on Christmas day can get anyone to smile.

Regardless if you're a kid, teen, or an adult Christmas never really loses it's holiday cheer.



Crisis at Christmas

When I was younger, Christmas was, of course, my favorite holiday. I would wake up on the cold morning in warm pajamas and run to my living room to find many presents beautifully stacked under a large, colorful Christmas tree.

Now that I am older, Christmas is no longer my favorite holiday. It is, in fact, now my least favorite.

Every Christmas for the past few years of my short life, the amount of presents under the tree has decreased. Not only have the amount of them decreased, but the worth of the presents has, as well: board games have become socks, expensive electronics have been traded for paperback books, and brand name clothes have been replaced with more affordable brands.

My father used to take my family Christmas tree shopping in November every year, but a few years ago my parents made an economic decision to buy an artificial Christmas tree that we now use every year. I have grown nostalgic towards the scent of an evergreen conifer.

Because the children in my family are not as enthusiastic about Christmas anymore, having family gatherings isn't as pleasant as it used to be. The number of relatives at our family gatherings has decreased, and the quantity of food and Christmas spirit has likewise plummeted.

Though all these Christmas rituals and icons are now gone, they are not the reason I no longer enjoy the holiday. The reason I loathe Christmas is the fact that I can no longer see the joy on my parents' faces as the holiday grows nearer every year.

My mother lost her job and my father's work hours have been reduced, both due to the economic state of this country. The fact that they don't have money means they are unable to buy my siblings and me gifts, despite their desire to. Although my siblings and I don't care about the fact that we don't get anything on Christmas morning, our parents still feel melancholic about the fact that they are unable to give us that childish joy.

I'm sure this story applies to many of the students at Poly; for some, this story may be worse.

The current economic state of this country is affecting many of us in ways we do not enjoy, obviously. With the re-election of President Obama, the country awaits positive changes.

As Poly students also wait, they learn about the basics of economics their senior year, a very essential part in becoming an adult and being responsible for their own financial problems.

What a Wonderful Christmas



Santa Claus is Really Real

Santa Claus is real.

You've never seen a million dollars, doesn't mean it doesn't exist. You can't see love, doesn't mean it doesn't exist. You've never seen Jesus, you wouldn't know if he's real or not.

We were raised to believe only what we can see.

"If you can't see it, it's not real," that's the saying that has been drilled into our minds by our hapless society.

Christmas morning you wake up, run to your tree to find lots of attractive presents. Even if you only receive one present, seeing your younger sibling's faces glowing while they open their gifts must have an affect on you.

The happiness you feel is the Santa in you. That's right, there's a Santa in everyone.

The original St. Nicholas lived in southwestern Turkey in the 4th century. He was praised for making sailors and children's miracles happen.

Santa Claus was real and still is. He filled children's hearts with joy.

Did he disappoint you? Did he promise you a gift, you never received? He has a lot of miracles to do around the world, he doesn't have time to get a three year old a Barbie or hot wheels car.

I, a high schooler, believes in old saint Nicholas. And so should you.

When did Santa stop giving you presents?

For me, I stopped receiving mine as soon as my age turned to two digits. I whined and cried for hours because I was on Santa's "naughty" list.

But that evening, I felt like the happiest and coolest kid because I received the best Nintendo Gameboy from my parents.

People remain in their "good Samaritan" characters on Christmas as long as they receive presents or get intoxicated with eggnog.

Even though my Korean Santa Claus stopped giving me presents, I quickly found another reason to fall back in love with Christmas.

Birthdays, Halloween, Valentine's Day, and other holidays do not beat the Christmas-y cheer and magical legends of Santa Claus on Christmas day.

Christmas is the only day when our problems don't seem to matter.

Children run to the tree on early Christmas mornings. Couples have another reason to kiss because of the mistletoes. Families reunite. Workers receive double pay.

Even in Christmas-themed films, happy endings are a must. Scrooge and the Grinch both discover the true meaning of Christmas and their bitter persona melt away.

Why couldn't Scrooge or the Grinch change on Halloween or Hanukah? What about the wintery Christmas season made them change?

The answer lies in people.

Everybody is simply happy on Christmas.

Houses and pine trees are decorated. Carols resonate in every neighborhood. Traditional Christmas cuisines are served. Cards wish people "A Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year!"

People deliberately make Christmas day the happiest day of the year by doing these things. To not feel the gleeful aura people create on this day would be hard.

And this is not a bad thing. It's actually the most wonderful time of the year.

The Spirit of Christmas



When I was five I would jump out of my bed excited and ready to open the presents Santa Claus left for me. I could not wait to check my stocking for all the goodies I would get. I didn't even care about what everyone else received as long as I got what I wanted.

Now that I am older I worry more about making sure everyone else gets a present, the way they made sure I had one when I was five. I still jump out of bed the way I did back then except now I look at the way my sisters jump out of bed too.

I check my stocking but I don't get anything even close to what I used to get, in fact I get nothing, not even a piece of coal. Now I know Santa isn't real, it was just my mom and dad. Yeah, that is what changed Christmas for me.

ENTERTAINMENT

Parrots Play Army Games

PE classes take physical challenges, chopper ride.

By Alfredo Quezada
Staff Writer

The U.S. Army brought some fun and games to Poly Wednesday. Students in physical education classes with Toby Bachenheimer and Charles Schwal participated.

The program included three options. The first was to perform pull-ups. Male students had to do 12 pull-ups or more while female students had to do one.

The second option was a teamwork challenge.

A group of four students had to cross a black mat from using two wooden planks. One plank was already set down and one plank was handed to a student on the team.

The team had to carefully negotiate obstacles on the mat. The leader of the group had to set down the wooden plank to cross over and the last person had to pick up the first plank and carefully pass it up to the leader. This process was repeated until the team reached the other end of the mat.

The last option was to do a push-up with three other students. The student had to perform a push-up while each of the other three students put a foot on the student's leg. If the student couldn't take the weight, another student was allowed to try.

Each student who completed a challenge received a hand stamp for access to the helicopter ride.

The helicopter simulation was a mechanical ride simulating actual helicopter movements and visuals of an actual flight aboard a helicopter. Safety belts were required.

The simulation was intense when the helicopter flew far to the left or right. A joy stick between the rider's legs was available to simulate maneuvering the helicopter.

An optional physical challenge was available along with an optional intelligence mini-game.

The physical challenge was to perform sit-ups. For the intelligence portion, the student had to tap on a circle whenever it popped up on the touch screen monitor. Then the student did push-ups. All tasks had to be completed within the given time. Winners received a U.S Army shirt and bag.

The intelligence mini-game involved students creating a tank with parts they were given. Students had to use knowledge and instructions to find out how the pieces fit together.



Photo by Vanessa Aquino

WORKOUT: Parrots test their strength, take an intelligence test and try flying helicopters (below) with the U.S. Army.

The purpose of the program is to show students how to get physically active, according to Staff Sergeant Alex D. Fogle.

"It's not to recruit students for the army," Fogle said, "it's to show students teamwork, how to work with each other and leadership, how everyone comprehends orders to get a task done."

The tour will visit John Burroughs High School next and then high schools in San Gabriel.



Wreck-It Rocks

By Maureen Kang
Staff Writer

"Wreck-It Ralph" is Disney Animation's fond look back at the golden age of arcade play in the 80s.

The action takes place at an arcade where, after hours, video game characters are free to travel outside of their games, hold parties, drink at bars and socialize.

Unappreciated nine-foot giant Wreck-It Ralph breaks stuff and goody two-shoes hero Fix It Felix Jr. repairs the damage.

But after thirty years as the bad guy, Ralph wants to be the hero for once.

At a meeting of arcade bad guys like the ghost from Pac Man, Ralph is informed that they are all programmed and cannot change. Ralph is stuck with his identity crisis.

When he meets fellow "glitch" Vanellope von Schweetz (Sarah Silverman) in a car-racing game called Sugar Rush, the pair, both fighting for self-esteem, become partners-in-crime.

When Ralph enters the HD world of violent shooter game Hero's Duty and tries to change the rules of the gaming world, trouble starts.

Sexy and tough commander Calhoun and Fix-It Felix Jr. join forces to find Ralph and repair his wrecking.

Director Rich Moore has paid great attention to detail in Ralph's realm, from the transit system that runs through the electrical cords to the Game Central Station, a gateway to every video game in the arcade room.

"Wreck It Ralph" is playful and fast-paced. The intertwining of the characters' own personal dilemmas keeps the audience guessing how the characters will find a resolution.

Meanwhile, the Disney message, "It is okay to be yourself," comes through loud and clear.

"Wreck It Ralph" features the voices of John C. Reilly as Ralph, Sarah Silverman as Vanellope, Jane Lynch as Calhoun and Jack McBrayer as Felix.



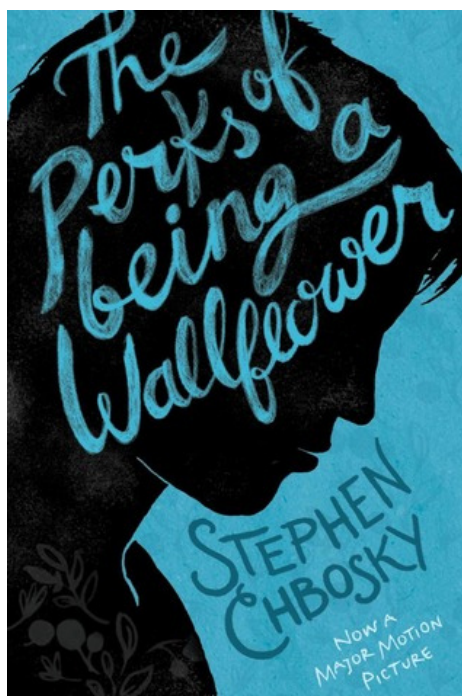
Google Image

WRECK-IT: John C. Reilly and Sarah Silverman do voices in Disney comedy.

Meet the New Millennium's Holden Caulfield

Chbosky's attempt at a "Catcher in the Rye" styled coming-of-age novel finds an audience.

By Lisa Guardado
Staff Writer



J. D Salinger's 1951 classic "Catcher in the Rye" sells 250,000 copies a year, 65M so far and counting. Many consider the novel, which deals with "complex issues of identity, belonging, connection, and alienation," among the top 100 of the 20th century. Its antihero, Holden Caulfield, is an icon of teen rebellion.

Salinger clearly seems to have cornered the teen angst market. But five decades later, LA author and USC grad Stephen Chbosky takes a shot at a similar adolescent antihero with similar problems in his 1999 debut novel "The Perks of Being a Wallflower," recently released as a feature film with Chbosky directing.

Like "Catcher," "Wallflower" is easy for teens to read and relate to.

And like Holden, Chbosky main character Charlie, 15, has issues with identity and belonging. Charlie is an observer, a wallflower, a kid who mostly communicates with an anonymous pen pal. The novel is told through this correspondence.

Charlie has an older brother who attends Penn State on a football scholarship and an older sister who is a senior at Charlie's Pittsburgh high school.

Charlie lost a favorite aunt in a car accident on his seventh birthday. His best friend committed suicide when Charlie was in the seventh grade.

Charlie tells his counselor "I am crying still. I never did stop crying."

At his high school homecoming game, freshman Charlie meets high school senior Sam and her stepbrother Patrick. Charlie falls for Sam and the two become close friends.

Sam is outgoing, an outcast in a way because she knows her own mind. Sam also experiments with drugs.

Patrick, meanwhile, is homosexual, struggling with constant depression and

experimenting with drugs.

During lunch one day, a student calls Patrick a "faggot." Patrick breaks into a fight and Charlie steps in to defend Patrick.

Later, Patrick invites Charlie mini golfing. Suddenly, Patrick breaks down and kisses Charlie. Innocent Charlie doesn't fight back, even though he is straight. Patrick is even more upset and quickly regrets the kiss. It's okay, Charlie says, though he is upset too.

As he spends more time with Patrick and Sam, Charlie learns to be himself more.

"I don't remember where we were walking to or where we were walking from," Charlie says. "I don't even remember the season. I just remember walking between them and feeling for the first time that I belonged somewhere."

Like Sam and Patrick, Charlie begins to experiment with marijuana and LSD.

When the school year comes to a close and Sam prepares to go away to college, Charlie and Sam talk about the year.

"You can't just sit there and put everybody's lives ahead of yours and think that counts as love," Sam says. "It's great that you can listen and be a shoulder to someone, but what about when someone doesn't need a shoulder? You have to do things."

Charlie finally responds when Sam expresses her true feelings for him. He quits being an observer, a "wallflower," and begins to mature as an individual.

Time will tell if Chbosky becomes the Salinger of the new millennium. But things are going well for Chbosky and Charlie. "Wallflower's" book sales have topped a million and the film has done about \$20M worldwide. The American Library Association's "Booklist" chose "Wallflower" as a Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Readers and one of the Top 10 Gay and Lesbian Books for Youth.

FOOD

the COMPETITIVE EDGE

By Rudy Guijaro
Staff Writer

Poly culinary arts students will participate in a nationwide competition called "Cooking Up Change" to create an original, healthy school lunch on a tight budget.

Student cooks will brainstorm a full meal from scratch, submit the recipes, practice making it, and perfect it by the contest's January 24 deadline.

The lunch must consist of a protein (2-3 ounces of meat or meat alternative), one cup of vegetables, and two sides, one of which has to be fruit. The meal must be 750-850 calories, less than 10 percent fat and

contain no more than 10 ingredients.

Each dish may be no more than six steps because it has to be fast and easy for school cafeteria personnel to prepare.

Hundreds of high schools in nine different cities across the country will host the first competition, set for January 31.

One winning team from each city will travel to Washington DC to compete for first place in the national finals.

The winning meal will be served in high schools across the nation and in the cafeteria of the U.S. House of Representatives.

In addition, the winning team will have the honor of cooking

with chefs from the White House and serving their dish to First Lady Michelle Obama.

"Cooking Up Change is going to be bigger than other previous competitions," said Poly cooking teacher Robert Higgins.

Poly culinary students have won various cooking competitions including LAUSD's "I'm In" campaign and the Careers through Culinary Arts Program (CCAP).

"I have the best students in LAUSD," Higgins said. "We get compliments from District people downtown all the time."

Below are interviews with the two teams.



TEAM 1

Melissa Montes / Cyrus Pozos

Name four ingredients that you need to make anything?

MM: I think Celery, carrots, potatoes, and any type of chili (powder, peppers, and jalapeños). Chili is one of the main ingredients for any savory dish and the other three ingredients are used in any Mexican, Brazilian, or Chinese

CP: I'd say Salt, pepper, meat, and vegetables because you can make your breakfast lunch and dinner with those four.

Name four of the most unusual ingredients you've used and in what dishes you've used them in?

MM: Paprika in Mexican food (didn't remember any dishes exactly), peanut butter in Stir Fry which is a Chinese dish, chili powder in ice-cream (didn't remember the name), and using salt and sugar on the same dish it was Chinese food.

CP: One would be rice vinegar another would be pumpkin seeds and

ghost peppers in "mole Poblano" (mexican dish).

What criteria do you use to judge an entrée or a meal that you cooked?

MM: Higgins always taught us it's the texture, taste and the presentation so that's what we go by.

What is it about cooking that satisfies you?

MM: How we need to do so many steps to make one simple dish, and being able to make something edible, special, and unique.

CP: It would be taking the artistic part of myself and incorporating it into my dish thus creating a much better looking presentation.

Are you competitive by nature?

MM: I'm very competitive; it's something that every chef needs to make their cooking more unique than any other.

CP: I'm not, but it's growing on me now that I've started competing.

What qualities will determine the winner of this "Cooking up Change" contest?

MM: It's the individuality interpreted in the dish, because we are supposed to get a recipe that everybody is familiar with but we have to give it our own touch and we have to keep in mind that this competition has to do with a healthy recipe and that's sort of a challenge for us.

CP: To me it would be to bring an ability to cook a healthy meal for kids that is good for them and delicious and they won't just throw it away like the food here.

Do you subscribe to the philosophy that whatever you cook must be healthy as well as good, or is good cooking whatever is good to eat?

MM: Well I think it depends on the portion, but now it's a new generation and we're trying to stop this obesity epidemic so I think it should be healthy too.

CP: It's both because good food satisfies you and healthy foods give you nutrition your body needs instead of killing you like fast food.

Do you know what a dish is going to taste like before you prepare it or do you experiment?

MM: Yes as long as we're familiar with the ingredients we'll know exactly how it'll taste.

CP: Yeah, I usually know from past experiences and ingredients.

Is cooking an art, or can anyone learn how?

MM: Yes cooking is a unique art. I think just cause you like to eat doesn't mean you can cook because it's a lot of work and dedication to be a cook.

CP: It's an art and a passion because you have to be able to devote a lot of time and make an effort to show that you have pride in your meal. You have to have passion and drive to be a cook so I don't think so.

When did you first consider yourself a cook or a chef and what criteria helped you draw that conclusion?

MM: It was my mom, she got her skills from my grandma and she passed it down to me. Since I was 8, I always wanted to cook.

CP: I got it from my grandma; I would watch her cook Christmas and thanksgiving dinners and it just grew on me.

How important is the visual appearance of a dish or plate?

MM: It's very important; you don't want to eat something that doesn't look good.

CP: What she said.

What reaction did you get from your family and friends when they found out you're a cook?

MM: My mom is very proud of me and she likes seeing me participate in so many competitions. They are surprised at how far I went with cooking and how much experience I picked up.

CP: My family and a lot of my friends were surprised because I don't look like the cooking type, but my family kind of had an idea but they didn't know how much I enjoyed it till now.



TEAM 2 –

Kenya Rodriguez / Jasmine Sandoval

What are the four most important ingredients to make anything?

KR: I think its Salt and pepper, carrots, and onions and potatoes

JS: Yeah, that's the base of about all you need to cook.

Name four unusual ingredients you've used in a dish?

KR: We made a cucumber salad but that's not really weird, It's just that we usually do normal entrées like lasagna and stew.

What criteria do you use to judge an entrée or a meal that you

cooked?

KR: I think the texture, presentation, and originality.

What is it about cooking that satisfies you?

KR: The fact that everyone in my family cooks and I can contribute to that.

JS: I like getting the satisfaction that I make my own food and I get to eat it so like I work hard to make it and I get to reward myself by eating it. It feels good.

Are you competitive?

KR: Yea we can get pretty competitive during competitions.

What qualities will determine the winners of this "Cooking up Change" contest?

KR: They're looking for a healthy, creative, and tasty meal. I mean it's still going to be cafeteria food but it will taste better than our current lunch.

Do you believe in the philosophy that whatever you cook must be healthy as well as good, or is good cooking whatever tastes good?

KR: I believe it should be healthy and tasteful.

JS: Yeah, it goes both ways but sometimes it's hard to make a meal that's healthy and taste good.

Is cooking an art, or can anyone learn how?

KR: You have to have passion. If you cook just to cook it won't come out good.

JS: It's an art, but anyone can learn how to cook but you have to have heart in it as cheesy as that sounds.

When did you consider yourself a chef and what criteria helped you

draw that conclusion?

KR: When I took Mr. Higgins class in 10th grade that's when I realized this might be my passion and before I thought it was dumb to be a cook but after learning how and seeing my dad cooking all the time I thought it might be my thing.

JS: For me it was probably when Chef Higgins recommended me into the Art Institute program. It was a 10 week summer program and it really opened my eyes that I can cook, this can be my career, I can be a chef.

Is the right equipment important when you're cooking or baking?

KR: Yeah. Once we messed up a batch of cupcakes because we already knew the recipe but we weren't paying attention to pot measurements and we messed the whole thing up.

JS: Yeah, it's super important, because when you're cooking, you're always using measurements and if you don't have the exact measurements or pot it will mess everything up, especially when you're baking.

How important is visual appearance?

KR: It's very important because if it looks crappy, no one will want to eat it. And if looks gross than it might taste gross or give the impression that it tastes nasty.

JS: It's super important, because it's about appearance as well as taste. It takes away from the dish if it looks nasty. The dish has to look presentable.

Are you picky when you eat what someone else cooks? When you go to restaurants?

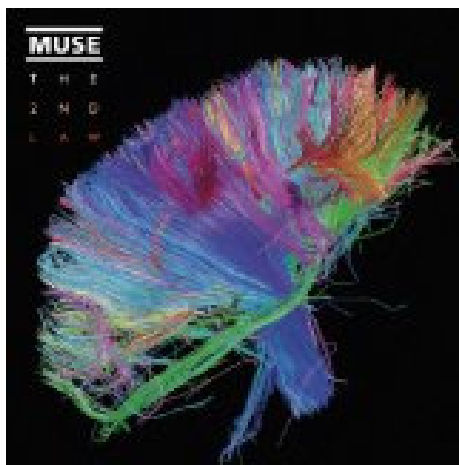
KR: Just in the cooking class, but in restaurants I'm not picky.

JS: Yeah, sometimes in the cooking club kids think they know what they're doing just because they took the class before, but they still seem lost and you have to be on their cases. No, not in restaurants.

MEDIA

The Shock of the New Muse's "The 2nd Law" is eclectic mix. Reactions are too.

By Adrianna Garcia
Staff Writer



Google Image

VARIETY: Muse samples a variety of genres on latest effort, upsetting some long-time fans.

Muse has a distinctive sound, but "The 2nd Law" takes the band's originality to a whole new level.

When lead singer Matthew Bellamy described the album as a "Christian gangsta rap-jazz odyssey with some ambient rebellious dubstep and face-melting metal flamenco cowboy psychedelia," he was only somewhat kidding.

"Law" is filled with music inspired by icons such as Queen, U2 and Led Zeppelin. Bellamy says dubstep master Skrillex was also an inspiration for the album.

"Madness" and "Survival" have already become hits. "Survival" was also the official song of the London Summer Olympics.

"Supremacy," the opening track, is an extravagance of instruments creating a melody fit for a James Bond film. The rest combine electronic sounds with Bellamy's unique guitar riffs and vocals.

"Panic Station" got Muse a parental advisory label for the first time.

The album's eclectic mix also includes the lullaby-like "Explorers" and the rebellious genre-breaking last two tracks, "Unsustainable" and "Isolated System."

"Law" also features bassist Christopher Wolstenholme's soft, smooth vocals doing "Liquid State" and "Save Me," about his problem with alcohol.

"Law" displays a confident and experienced Muse, willing to experiment with different instruments and genres while unconcerned about commercial appeal.

However, the move has cost Muse some fans. Purists and those with a narrow musical mind who weren't too thrilled with the album's dubstep tracks voiced their complaints on YouTube and review sites.

"Law" is the shock of the new. Whether the album is considered a masterpiece or just an odd collection of songs really depends on the listener's ear.

The 13-track album, released October 2, sold 101,000 copies its first week.

Apple in the Post-Jobs Era - Losing Its Touch?

By Heidy Reyes
Staff Writer

Is Apple, once known for its rabid fan base, losing its touch?

Apple customers have been disappointed lately with product upgrades. Meanwhile, the competition is offering more features and lower prices.

iPad issues

Customers were upset when Apple released the latest iPad two months after the previous iteration. Those expecting to get Siri technology in the new model didn't.

Newer versions of the iPad have faults from earlier models. Slow charging remains an issue, as does heating up quickly.

Australian customers faced 4g problems with the new iPad, forcing Apple to hand out refunds to many disappointed buyers.

Apple's share of the tablet market has dropped to 50.4% from 65.4% since the last quarter, according to International Data Corporation (IDC).

Meanwhile, other manufacturers are offering tablets with smart features for a more affordable price.

IDC reports an increase in electronic sales from big time vendors like Samsung and Amazon. And Microsoft just released its first tablet.

iPhone issues

The iPhone 5's screen is only .5 inch larger than the iPhone 4. The iPhone 5 charging connector is smaller and more flexible, but competitors have gone wireless. Users simply place the phone atop the iPad.

The iPhone processor is generations older than competitors, who offer more features better than the iPhone.

Google Inc's Android phones, for example, come with N.F.C. (Near-Field Communications), making sharing simpler, including making payments online.

Nokia Corp. has a smart phone that uses face recognition to unlock the device, while iPhone users must swipe screens and enter codes.

Pandora

Now Apple is eyeing Pandora's listeners.

Pandora offers a free online radio that plays music according to listener taste - artist, genre, album, etc.

Pandora relies on a mandatory license that limits how often users can skip tracks or listen to a certain artist per hour. Apple wants to team up with labels and make licensing pacts to give users more listening flexibility and choices.

Pandora isn't worried, however.

"We remain focused on our listeners and delivering the best internet radio experience for them" said Pandora vice president of communications Eric Brown.

Maybe Apple should consider doing the same - focus more on customers and less on competitors.

Opportunity Room

[From Opportunity, front page]

wanted to accomplish," said De Santiago. "We needed to come up with something, whether through SLCs or school wide, that supports working out the positive aspect instead of just focusing on the negative."

LAUSD mandates that Poly suspend or expel a student for any one of five behaviors: possessing controlled substances, committing sexual harassment and/or battery, brandishing a knife and possessing explosives.

The Opportunity Room is for other issues, situations where behavior modification is at the principal's discretion.

"For example, if two students are fighting, we have the discretion to keep the students here, have them continue their school work and get counseling, all with the expectation that the students will turn around their behavior," said De Santiago.

"We want the students to see the opportunity room as a positive action, not a disciplinary option."

-Lourdes De Santiago.

The Opportunity Room facilitator is in charge of getting the students homework from all their classes and he/she is their support for the day.

The Opportunity Room is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday, with counseling on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

An Opportunity Room log is filled out for each student throughout the day. Each student receives counseling by either school therapist Maribel Munguia or one of her interns.

"We want the students to see the Opportunity Room as a positive action, not a disciplinary option," said De Santiago. "We are connecting students with the opportunity to be counseled and talk about problems they might have."

Instead of going home and watching TV all day long, the students are here and doing work. The idea is to make the consequences of their misbehavior uncomfortable for them so they can turn around their behavior.

Substitute teacher John Student is the current Opportunity Room facilitator. Baseball coach Gabe Cerna will run the Opportunity Room for the spring semester.

The Opportunity Room facilitator must have a teacher's certification.

"I take the time to sit down with our opportunity room facilitator and explain to him what the vision of the Opportunity Room is and what his role was and what we want the outcome to be for each student," said De Santiago.

Twice a week, students see a counselor and have the opportunity to talk about self-esteem.

"The counselors give us documentation of

the participation and topics they went over," De Santiago said.

Poly's program has been largely successful. "Most kids who show up the first time don't come back," said de Santiago.

Poly's Opportunity Room program offers a "total family support counseling service" for anger management and drug issues, De Santiago said.

Opportunity Room students get both drug abuse and anger management counseling.

"I can tell you from experience that students who have short tempers and anger issues are most likely doing drugs," said De Santiago.

The goal of the Opportunity Room program is to make students aware of the dangers of drug abuse and violence.

Aca Deca Scrimmage

[From Strong Aca Deca, front page]

food. The focus of the week is on reading the materials."

Block said the Parrot team could adopt a similar tactic.

"But in order for it to work, everyone needs to want to do it," Block said. "This year's team is very young and at least seven will be at this school next year. If they are up for it so am I."

Poly's team has been preparing since May. The materials arrive at the beginning of June.

"The earlier you start, the better the results," Block said. "Unless the team is studying 24/7, they can always study more. That might seem harsh, but the key to success is trying to squeeze out a few more hours of study that the student didn't know was possible."

Monday Block met with the entire team to discuss their study strategy from now until the actual competition in January.

"There is only one official scrimmage," Block said, "which is why meeting now is so important. Our team will discuss if we want to have shorter smaller scrimmages with other schools in the competition."

The next formal competition will be on the last Saturday in January and the first Saturday in February at Roybal Learning Center.

"I've been coaching almost a decade now and I can say the schools that study the most time are the most successful," Block said. "If the team is able to push themselves for the next nine weeks, this team should make it to state."

Every team has three honors, three scholastics, and three varsity students. Honors mem-

bers need to have over a 3.75 GPA, scholastics need a GPA that ranges from 3.0 to 3.75 and varsity members can have anything under a 3.0 GPA. The top two honors and varsity count towards team's scores.

Apart from the competition itself, each student can receive medals against other students in their GPA range.

"For the first four years of coaching, I did not have competitive teams," Block said, "and I was still learning the in and outs on how to train them. The last four teams have all been very competitive."

"There is a need to work them very hard to get to a high level of achievement," Block said. "I prepare them for what I hope to be a lifetime of success and achievement."

Toy Drive

[From Elves, front page]

Parrot generosity is legendary around the District.

"I'm not sure if other schools do this," Le Clair said, "but we have been told and have read on the internet that we raise more than any other high school. Not just Christmas, all holidays."

Poly raises money for all winter holidays, from Homecoming to New Year's.

"We try to be creative," Le Clair said. "During Thanksgiving, we did a turkey drive with little Thanksgiving bags and stuff."

Be an
OPTIMIST



FILM



"SKYFALL" - Nov. 9

Daniel Craig is back for his third go-round, Berenice Marlohe is the new Bond girl, pop sensation Adele sings the title theme and Sam Mendes ("Revolutionary Road") directs.

Eye-popping visuals, plenty of firepower, narrow escapes and a plot twist here and there offer everything an audience expects from a \$200M Bond budget.

This time our hero is after a stolen computer drive containing the names of undercover agents.

Critics in general have had nice things to say, audiences too. "Skyfall" has the highest domestic gross of any Bond flick and worldwide sales are over half a billion dollars. You don't wanna miss this one.



In director Christopher Nolan's lengthy finale, Batman (Christian Bale) must rise from the shadows to help Gotham defeat terrorist villain Bane (Tom Hardy). Catwoman (Anne Hathaway), police officer John Blake (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) and Commissioner Gordon (Gary Oldman) lend a hand before Bane destroys the city.

Batman once again makes personal sacrifices for the sake of the city's people and ultimately changes his views on how he wants to spend his future.

Nolan's ending fuels the possibility of another film focused on Robin's story. The highly anticipated sequel's opening weekend did \$162M.

"THE HUNGER GAMES" - Mar. 23

Fans of the YA trilogy queued up long before the midnight opening of this dystopian sci-fi epic featuring rising star Jennifer Lawrence as Katniss Everdeen.

Author Suzanne Collins' message-laden take on reality TV and the Iraq war has two teens from each of twelve districts fighting to the death in a televised competition. Katniss takes her younger sister's place and teams with Peeta Mellark (Josh Hutcherson) after training and advice from alcoholic mentor Maymich Abernathy (Woody Harrelson).

Director Gary Ross, who won't be doing the sequel, carefully delivers Collins' lessons on self-sacrifice and family values.

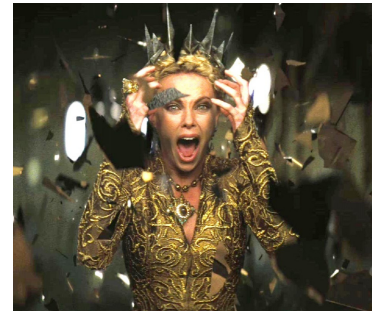


"THE DARK KNIGHT RISES" - July 20

This take on the Disney classic, directed by first-time feature filmmaker Rupert Sanders, has Kristen Stewart as Snow White, on a mission to destroy the Evil Queen, a dark and gothic Charlize Theron deliciously costumed.

The huntsman, a hunky Chris Hemsworth, is dispatched to find and kill Snow White, but instead becomes her protector as the two journey to a neighboring kingdom and plot to fight the queen's dark army.

Sanders' high-tech scenery dazzles on a chase through a dead forest, a peasant village set ablaze and an enchanted sanctuary with mushrooms with eyeballs and albino fairies. Did we mention dwarfs that are full sized and digitized?



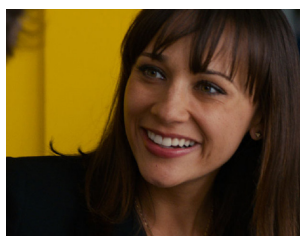
"SNOW WHITE AND THE HUNTSMAN" Jun. 1

The action is intense, the settings are eye-catching and the pace mostly relentless. It may not be as the Brothers Grimm intended, but "Snow White" fills the bill as fairy tale fantasy.

BEST OF 2012

Ten that sold a lot of popcorn.

By Adrianna Garcia
Staff Writer



"CELESTE AND JESSE FOREVER" - Aug. 24

Another Indie film about relationships, this one has Celeste (Rashida Jones, who also co-wrote) divorcing Jesse (SNL's Andy Samberg). The twist here is that the pair remain together, even though they begin seeing others.

"Celeste and Jesse Forever" is littered with witty dialogue and a couple of surprises along the way. Rookie director Lee Toland Krieger's effort is a refreshing break from the more smarmy love stories that clutter the cinemaxes.



"ARGO" - Oct. 12

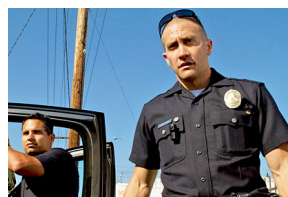
Ben Affleck directs and stars in this thriller set during the Iranian hostage crisis.

CIA field operative Antonio Mendez (Affleck) comes up with a daring plan to rescue six consulate members who managed to escape when the U.S. embassy was overrun. He'll pass them off as a film crew scouting locations and bring them back with him.

Movie producer Lester Siegel (Alan Arkin) and makeup artist John Chambers (John Goodman) pull some strings to arrange the Hollywood angle on the fake movie. Mendez overcomes a series of challenges in Tehran, including convincing the six Americans that their false identities will work.

"Argo" is an edge-of-your-seat thriller that should get some nominations come Academy Award time.

Set in South Central Los Angeles, "Watch" follows young cops Brian Taylor (Jake Gyllenhaal) and partner Mike Zavala (Michael Peña) as they deal with gang violence and murder.



"END OF WATCH" Sept. 21

The two officers become targets of a drug cartel but have no idea they're being hunted down. Eventually, their fate catches up and they have to face their enemies.

Indie director David Ayer's film has a documentary look that adds to the gritty realism. The setup is that Taylor is taking a film course and decides to document his shifts as a class assignment.



"MOONRISE KINGDOM" Jun. 29

A great cast and smart writing are handled with care in this charming period film by director Wes Anderson.

A storm is brewing off the coast of an English island when 12-year olds Sam (Jared Gilman) and Suzy (Kara Hayward) elope. Sheriff Bruce Willis and Scout Master Edward Norton form a search party and tensions arise as the search group begins to point fingers for the situation.

Bill Murray and Frances McDormand are the parents (Suzy's) in distress.

"Kingdom" nicely contrasts youthful innocence and complicated family ties with refreshing success.



"ROBOT AND FRANK" - Aug. 19

Director Jake Schreier uses the unconventional, a robot, to examine family ties and relationships in this futuristic indie. Frank (Frank Langella), a former thief of some local notoriety, has Alzheimer's. Son Hunter (James Marsden) gives him a robot to help with everyday tasks.

The robot cooks, cleans, and converses. Together, they visit the local library where Frank often chats with the librarian Jennifer (Susan Sarandon).

When Frank realizes the robot doesn't completely understand the difference between right and wrong, he asks his mechanical friend to assist with a theft. As events unfold, Frank and the robot develop an unexpected bond.



"THE MASTER" Sept. 21

Director Paul Thomas Anderson's dark tale about the lengths people will go to obtain power and control.

WWII Navy vet Freddie Quell (Joaquin Phoenix), suffering from post-traumatic stress, accidentally boards a yacht belonging to cult leader Lancaster Dodd (Phillip Seymour Hoffman). Quell falls in with Dodd's group of followers and travels with them to spread the word.

But Dodd has a dark side and Quell soon begins to question Dodd's teachings. The mood grows ever more ominous and concern for Quell creates a disturbing tension.

SPORTS

PRESEASON

Woskanian Takes Helm

Former Katz assistant is new varsity head coach.

By Sports Staff
Staff Writer

The OPTIMIST spoke with new Parrot head coach Alan Woskanian about the upcoming basketball season. Here's what he said.

The Coach

I received a BA in Psychology from University of Nevada Las Vegas in 1998 and a Masters in Social Work from the University of Southern California in 2006

My BA in Psychology and my work as a PSA Counselor have helped me in forming relationships with the players and gaining their trust. The psychology background does allow me at times to read between the lines.

After all, a coach is really a teacher and counselor rolled into one. You are guiding the lives of young men to be responsible, hard working and confident in achieving their goals.

A University of Minnesota study found 87% of high school athletes were more successful in life because they learned to fail and return to work hard.

I graduated from Hoover High School in 1992 and transferred to Glendale College in 1995. I played varsity at Hoover High and one year at Glendale College.

I am a PSA Counselor at Canoga Park High School.

I was an assistant coach for a year and head coach for two years at Alemany High School in the late 90s. I returned to coaching two years ago as an assistant to Brad Katz.

My assistant coach is Gregory Mack Jr., a 2002 Poly alum. He coached the 2007 Poly team with former coach Brad Katz. He is working towards his Masters Degree in Sports Psychology.

The Season

We are Division 3 this year. Basketball categorizes teams and divisions on a pts system. So certain

teams are always moving around in divisions.

Grant High School currently has the best basketball program in the East Valley League. The coach has been there for over 20 years. They have also had the most recent player (Gilbert Arenas) to enter the NBA. They have gone undefeated in League for the past five years.

I believe we have a strong chance of finishing first this year. Grant will give us a challenge for that spot but we are looking forward to it.

For pre-season, we have two single games - St Gens and LA High. We are also in the Coaches vs. Cancer Campbell Hall Tourney and the 32-team SF Valley Tourney.

We played St. Gens last year. We have a two-year obligation to them but we may continue this contest for years to come as the "Battle of Roscoe Game"

LA High we have played for the last four years.

We hope to achieve some wins.

These games are always good warm-ups for league.

Returning from last year are Kirvin Solares (12), Eric Figueroa (12), Curtis Pike (12), Jacob Payton (10), Richie Gonzalez (11), Gerry Vasquez (12), and Mario Castaneda (11).

Our leading scorers will be Cesar Reyes (10) and Sal Gonzalez (11).

We have been practicing since July. The hardest thing for our guys to learn is how to play offense as opposed to learning to play an offense. Defense is also always difficult.

I stress footwork, ball handling and, like most coaches, defense. Stats are important, although they don't always paint the whole picture. I do pay close attention to certain stats, like rebounds, shooting percentage and turnovers.

We can run the floor, we are a good shooting team and we are getting better at defending. We hope to score a lot more this year than in years past.

Fans can expect to see a lot of running, good perimeter shooting and an occasional shot from very deep by Cesar Reyes.



Photo by Vanessa Aquino
HOOPS: New varsity head coach Alan Woskanian at practice.

We will be running a "4 out 1 in" motion offense. The players move according to their reads, taking advantage of what the defense gives us.

We are looking to fast break every time. We are very guard oriented. Even our Bigs will be playing like guards and are allowed to shoot the 3. The guys will look to fast break first, then run the motion and if needed I will call a late play (last 10-15 seconds of the shot clock)

We are basically looking to keep the key open in order to get shots and lay ups that come off our off ball screens. We won't be necessarily looking to post up. We will be playing the short corner and baseline with the big man. We are athletic enough to assume our guards will be good rebounders and we will look to run on made shots.

Our go-to players are Reyes, Gonzalez, Mario Castaneda (11) and Eric Figueroa (12).

Our tallest player is about 6'4. I prepare my guys to be able to play at the next level and in order for them to succeed they all need to improve their guard skills.

We have a strong bench. I expect to be getting at least 15 pts off the bench and minutes will vary.

Consistent minutes will go to about three or four guys off the bench. We make that decision based on aggressive play, limited mistakes and ability to maintain the pace of the game.

If we're winning, we pull the starters when it looks as if we have put the other team in surrender mode, but no lead is ever safe.

Home Court has its obvious advantages as well as its disadvantages, but we prepare to play in any environment. Sometimes your best games are played in the most hostile gyms. We try to prepare our guys for the mental part of the game which plays a big factor for Home and Away games.

That's going to be our strategy."

The team practices five days a week.

"I'm trying to get them conditioned by running, sprinting, jumping and strengthening their hamstrings, where most of the injuries occur," Loza said. "We do a lot of stretches."

The team meets every day before practice.

"We talk about what we need to accomplish," Loza said. "We try to ignore any kind of negativity and keep it positive. We want motivation to win, and to compete."

Can Poly beat last year's 9-7-3, 4-6-2 season? Loza thinks so.

"If the players can keep their composure for the whole game, we have a pretty good chance," Loza said. "We have to follow the strategy of touching the ball a lot and wearing the other team down. Even if we're losing, I'll feel very confident until the end of the game."

Loza has only two returning varsity players and five JV. The rest of the team's 48 players are brand new.

Poly will open the season with an away non-conference game at Marshall on Wednesday. The Parrots defeated Marshall 4-0 last year.



Photo by Daniel Castro

UPBEAT: Boys soccer head coach Rafael Loza is upbeat about the season.

Boys Soccer Team Has Soft Touch

By Alfredo Quezada
Staff Writer

Poly varsity soccer head coach Rafael Loza likes to match his coaching strategy to his players.

"I coach according to the players I have," Loza said. "We don't have height, we don't have strength. What we have is a lot of tenth graders, so they don't have a lot of experience."

Loza remains optimistic.

"I have two athletes who stand out," Loza said. "They are physically tough, they know how to move the ball and are leaders on the field. They are in the mid-field so they distribute the ball."

Height is also a factor for Loza.

"Last year I believe we had the tallest team in the league," Loza said, "and this year we might have the shortest one."

Loza remains upbeat.

"This seems to be the best team so far," Loza said. "They play touching the ball - passing the ball back and fourth - and they pass it incredibly well."

That natural skill will become Poly's game strategy.

"We're going to try to win by wearing the other team down by passing, passing, passing," Loza said, "and hopefully by the second half, our opponents will be tired.

The Need for Speed

Coach Batiste promises run and gun offense.

By Sports Staff
Staff Writer

The OPTIMIST recently spoke with veteran Poly head coach Tramika Batiste about the basketball season. Here's what she told us.

The players

Our new players are freshman Ileya Rivera and juniors Kyra Cruz and Rania Hawatmeh.

Returning players include senior Allison Samonte, juniors Natalie Cristales, Stephanie Gurrola, Elenoa Taulaki and sophomores Bella Lopez and Monica Perla. My goal is to run as much as possible. Hopefully, you'll see a lot of fast breaks. We're also going to incorporate more plays than last year. They have the experience now to think and play.

Our passing is amazing at times. Natalie, Allison, and Kyra have had their fair share of jaw-dropping passes.

Monica Perla and Natalie Cristales will run the point. Allison Samonte can fill those shoes quite well, too.

Elenoa Taulaki is an incredibly strong postup player and she has become more confident. She's my Dwight Howard. I don't know of anyone who can stop her when she uses her power.

Stephanie Gurrola is a softer player, more like Pau Gasol. She plays with more finesse than power.

Natalie Cristales is a shooter and a great passer. Bella Lopez probably has the highest basketball IQ. She's a great shooter as well. Monica Perla is so quick with the ball that it's hard for many defenders to stick with her. She's also a phenomenal defender. Kyra Cruz is my go-to shooter. When she's on, it's magical. Allison Samonte is also a phenomenal defender who can score in crucial moments.

Basketball starts with good defense. To play good defense, a player has to anticipate, have patience, react quickly and have good timing.



Photo by Daniel Castro
READY: Veteran head coach Tramika Batiste says the girls basketball squad is ready to rumble.

Natalie, Ele, and Kyra will probably lead the team in points. However, everyone on the team can shoot well.

Ileya Rivera is a freshman with a future. She is a post player who can also run the point. She will get a lot of playing time.

Rania Hawatmeh gives the team a needed boost when she comes off the bench. She's not afraid to drive the ball in and make it happen.

Most of my players have a 3.0 GPA or higher. It's discipline that makes them amazing student-athletes.

The season

Last year the team was 9-19 and 6-6 in league, but practically brand new. I only had a few returners and none of them were starters. We had to scrap our plays and focus on fundamentals.

As the girls became more aware of the game and the intensity of the varsity level, their game inevitably improved. The majority of our wins came at the end of the season which showed the team's growth.

We will continue with our game plan from last year, but we'll step it up because their skill levels have improved tremendously.

We made the first playoff round last year. The second half of that game convinced me of this team's potential. They fought back like they had never done before and outscored the opposing team. But we were too far down to get the win.

We need to place in the top three in league if we definitely want to go to playoffs. Our toughest competition is Monroe. They have made it to State the last three years in a row. We're capable of beating everyone in league, but only if the girls believe in themselves.

Our first game of the season was a 60-40 win over Viewpoint on the 26th. We lost 64-44 to Brentwood on the 27th.

We also have preseason games against Reseda and Panorama.

My team goals are based on the ability of my players. Last year, the goal was to just make it to playoffs because the girls were so new. Just making it to the first round will not cut it this year. They've improved too much for that.

Basketball starts with good defense. To play good defense, a player has to anticipate, have patience, react quickly and have good timing.

You can't win if you don't score, and you can't score if you don't have the ball.

I change my offense to accommodate the players. Some teams have been more athletic and aggressive than others. Defense, however, stays the same. If you can't play defense, you can't play for me.

Fan support can change the momentum of a game. We should have lost to North Hollywood last season when we played them at home. They were more developed than us. But the gym was packed that day, and loud. My team fed off that energy and caused the biggest upset in years. It was like Christmas day.

Fans come out when we win. A few years ago when we were on top, our gym was always filled like the guys games were. When we weren't on top, it was like a deserted town.