

The Poly Optimist

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School

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SERVING THE POLY COMMUNITY SINCE 1913

JUNE 2013



Photos by Lirio Alberto & Kimberly Garcia

LIFE AFTER POLY: (from left) Faculty members Denise Beilinson, John Ebeling and Joyce Fidler will retire.

Three Parrot Faculty to Retire

Mayra Benitez
Staff Writer

Retiring Poly veteran teachers Joyce Fidler and Denise Beilinson aren't really the retiring types.

"I just got some new headshots taken. I'm back in acting classes. I'm writing again. And I'm going to be manufacturing my invention. I have it in a competition right now with the guy on 'Shark Tank,'" says Fidler.

"I'm leaving for a two-week trip to England, Scotland and Wales," said Beilinson. "I want to take up tap dancing and I'm going to become a grandmother, so that will keep me busy."

Beilinson did long term subbing for about six years with LAUSD before coming to Poly in 1998 and teaching Social Studies.

"I've been teaching for 28 years," Beilinson said.

Fidler, born in Alabama, came to California in 1990 and got her Special Education credential at Cal State Northridge.

She taught Special Ed English at Fulton for five years

and at Van Nuys High for ten.

Fidler came to Poly in 2005 as a District Office of Transition Services (DOTS) teacher.

"I work with every student at the school who has an IEP," said Fidler, "all 365 of them."

Parrots with an IEP are in some kind of special education for a minor disability or a major disability, Fidler said.

Both faculty members have nice things to say about Poly and Parrots.

"I will definitely miss the students who brighten my day every day," Beilinson said. "I will miss their sense of humor and their most wonderful hearts. They always come together when there is any sort of an emergency. They care about each other and for the most part, they are respectful to the teachers."

"There's so much that's being done right at this school now," Fidler said.

Fidler was willing to name names.

[See Three, pg 6]

Music to Their Ears

Concert Band and Percussion Ensemble pick up big prizes at "Music in the Park" festival.

By Jasmine Aquino
Staff Writer

Poly's concert band captured three trophies at the Music in the Parks festival on May 18, including First Place Concert Band, First Place Percussion Ensemble and Overall High School Concert Band.

"This was my last high school band competition," said Poly senior and band Drum Major Martha Tinajero, "so to end the season with two first place titles and an overall best title is absolutely perfect."

The concert band played "Fanfare Prelude on 'Ode to Joy'" arranged by Jim Curnow and "The Grand Old Duke of York" by Pierre La Plante.

Poly's percussion ensemble performed "Lindy Hop" and "Lady Gaga Fugue."

"The drummers have been practicing their pieces every day for the past few months, perfecting every little note," said Poly Drum Instructor Brian Heveron-Smith. "The fact that they won First Place came as no surprise to me."

The festival is hosted by the Music in the Parks organization, whose mission is "to bring together students and adjudicators in a positive learning environment that will inspire the students to strive not only for excellence, but to make music a lifelong activity."

The Educational Programs Network organizes the festivals every year for student choral, orchestral, and band ensembles. Groups perform in the morning and spend the remainder of the day at the amusement park. The day culminates with

[See Band, pg 6]

Coming to America

Writing assignment leads to personal journeys to the past for Parrots.

By Yesenia Carretero
Staff Writer

Thanks to an English assignment, a number of Parrots had a chance to connect with their immigrant past recently.

The opportunity came from a research and writing assignment in English teacher Ethel Matlen's English class. Students were to interview an immigrant about their experience coming to America.

Junior Ana Contreras, like many of her classmates, interviewed her grandmother.

"My grandma really got into it," said Contreras. "She's the one who gave me all the pictures about my mom. I got to talk to both of them and get memories out."

The assignment began with "Enrique's Journey," a true story about a young boy from Honduras coming to America to reunite with his mother who left him when he was five.

"I wanted students to connect with 'Enrique's Journey' at a deeper level and do that by making personal connections," Matlen said. "So this year, after reading the book, I decided to have my students interview an immigrant to this country."

The unintended consequences were that they connected with their family in ways they never expected, Matlen found, because these aren't stories people tell willingly.

"There's a sense of shame attached to them," Matlen said. "As much as they're proud of having survived, there's still a sense of shame attached."

"I really got so much out of the assignment," said Contreras. "I learned about how my mom came here and how her life was."

"At first, my mom was a little sad because talking brought back memories that she didn't want to remember," Contreras said. "But she kind of focused more on the good times she had and all this stuff."

Contreras learned that her mother went to college in Mexico and studied to be a secretary.

"When she got here, she got held back to tenth grade so it was really hard for her to catch up with everything," Contreras said. "I was kind of shocked because my mom is really smart even though she doesn't have a good job because she's an illegal immigrant."

Matlen's class learned that about

[See Student, pg 6]

Parrots as Poets

By Christine Maralit
Staff Writer

Ink pierces through skin poison killing innocence, slowly wasting away, eating into every crevasse of purity

- "Tattoo" Marisol Flores

An audience of parents and Parrots heard some 90 English and AP Spanish students read their poems on "Poetry Night" Thursday evening in Poly's cafeterium.

"It was a really daunting experience," said AP Spanish student Josselyn Barahona, "but once you were up there, you calm down and you present and everything goes smoothly."

The event was the brainchild of English teacher Ethel Matlen.

"I just felt that I never spent enough time with poetry," Matlen

[See Poetry, pg 6]

Strategies for Success

Psychologist Frank Mendez helps Parrots get on the right track.

By Walter Linares
Staff Writer

Poly psychologist Frank Mendez enjoys his work.

"Being a psychologist gives me a chance to work with kids who are having problems and help them straighten their lives out and give them strategies," Mendez says.

"Finding out that you can help a kid out that has been suffering from elementary school until now is very gratifying."

Mendez has a case load of 31 Special Ed kids he sees every two weeks.

"I probably have half dozen initial cases where kids who have learning or emotional disabilities that make it difficult for them to cope in a regular classroom," Mendez says. "I also see a number of General Ed students."

Most sessions with students are private, but Mendez likes to put stu-

dents with good social skills together so they can learn from each other.

"My strategy is to get to know the students, what their obstacles are," Mendez says. "Ninety

percent of my time is spent listening and trying to understand what the student is going through. Then I can help discover their strengths and how to overcome their obstacles."

Mendez occasionally deals with a suicidal student.

"Most of what we do here is reaction," Mendez says. "Many kids who are suicidal keep it inside themselves and fight it. You don't find out until they do something that's crying for help. Once that happens we help them out and try to get support from

[See Poly's, pg 6]



Photo by Lirio Alberto

Records Made to be Broken

Girls 4x400 relay team broke 20-year record.

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Photo by Lirio Alberto

Urgency Missing

Peralta says pitching leads to playoffs.

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OPINION

EDITORIAL

Editorial

Facebook or Faulkner

Teens read less often and for shorter amounts of time than other age groups and with all Americans in previous years, according to a recent report from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Young people in the 15-24 age group spend two hours of leisure time a day watching TV and only seven minutes reading.

Children grow up learning that reading is fun, experts say, but as they get older, reading becomes boring. So they read less.

What experts aren't looking at is the fact that teenagers are reading. Whether reading "What's on Jessica's mind" on Facebook, or tweeting to Jessica what they're doing on Twitter, or just surfing the plain ol' internet, young people are reading.

Surveys have found that less than one-third of 13-year-olds are daily

readers, a fourteen percent decline from 20 years earlier. Among 17 year olds, the percentage of nonreaders doubled over a 20 year period."

But generations change, everything evolves, everything is improved.

Some may argue that reading isn't improved because teenagers aren't reading a sufficient amount every day, or because they aren't reading novels with ridiculously complex words.

The truth is, we aren't in 1993 anymore. The world has evolved and the technology has advanced over the years. Curious teens are more addicted to reading on the web rather than reading a paperback.

That may not be the ideal reading that teachers or adults want from teens, but it's a new approach to reading for this generation of teens.

Rebuttal

Smart or Smartphone?

Reading the internet exclusively is not adequately preparing you for your future. Society has unquestionably been greatly affected by the internet and the easy access provided to it by ever-improving phone technology. However, this isn't always a change for the better.

At its best, the internet empowers individuals. We see this in consumer product reviews affecting sales on amazon.com, and the huge role the internet played in the push for liberty in the Arab spring. However, a vast majority of what you read on the internet is crafted to appeal to the lowest common denominator. Developing your literacy solely through your hand-held electronic device will make you myopic (a "ridiculously complex" word you should look up immediately), in more ways than one.

The faculty at Poly High School does an excellent job in choosing texts that either have an important message for young people to learn or build skills necessary to be successful in the workplace. Students should understand that your teachers, aside from wanting what's best for you, have a lot of life experience. Many of us come to teaching from other careers. We all have friends and family in different sectors of industry, and we know a lot more than you do about what literacy skills are required. This is not meant as a slam against students. You're just young. What you consider "ridiculously complex" words are simply the vocabulary used in fields that pay well. Your teachers have all been through college and understand the expectations. Most of you do not.

A text like Fahrenheit 451 may bore you, but that is largely because you are not interacting with it thoroughly enough. There are important

lessons in good literature. This novel shows that citizens in a free society should not blindly trust their government to act in their best interest. America committed to the Iraq War, in your lifetimes, a war that lasted longer than World War II. Young people, basically your age, were killed for a questionable purpose. If more Americans had read this novel, the government would not have been able to lead us astray. We are trying to instill in you the critical thinking skill of judging the credibility of what you are told, a skill that will make you full participants in our democracy and greatly determine your success in your eventual careers.

The value of good literature doesn't suddenly vanish just because you have a phone or an iPod you would rather be playing with because it's more fun. Yes, society marches inexorably towards the dominance of technology, and you need software skills that we offer you in keyboarding classes. Still, this technological dominance should not steer us away from being a literate society just because reading a novel requires effort and commitment to something that doesn't have games on it.

Just because things are changing doesn't mean they're changing for the better. A future society where people type "u" because it's easier and everyone is doing it is a dystopian future you shouldn't desire. Success in college and professionally will require a volume of reading that cannot be prepared for by surfing "the plain ol' internet." Turn your phone off and read a book, it's for your own good, and it's enjoyable, too.

- Evan Rabins, English

Stay Out of the Sandbox

Thank you for your invitation to comment on the editorial entitled "The New Reading." While I think it's great for students to express their views, the views themselves can sometimes be very wrong-headed. "The New Reading" is a textbook example.

"What's on Jessica's Mind" does nothing to develop Jessica's mind, or prepare her for college or the adult world (I suppose I should say "the educated adult world"). For teenagers to say "we're reading" while Twittering and Facebooking is a bit like kids in a sandbox saying "we're in construction" while digging holes and making sand castles.

It's not 1993 any more, but it's also not 2023 yet, and the students whose only "reading" is what their friends are "up to" are the students who will probably be wondering why it's so hard to find a job, and why they still have to live at home ten years after they were in high school.

Then, I think, "The New Reading" will get old very quickly. The students who will be leaders in 2023 will not be those who condemned serious literature (or any other rigorous academic challenge) as "ridiculously complex" in 2013. And I guarantee you that there will be large

numbers of intelligent and educated people in 2023 who will still be studying and enjoying (that's right, I said enjoying) Shakespeare (who was writing plays in 1593), while those who were "addicted to reading on the web" will be either unemployed or working in a job they hate, leading lives of "quiet desperation" (that's Thoreau, another ridiculously complex author).

I hope the author of that editorial reconsiders his/her views and decides to challenge himself/herself academically, rather than building a mental sandbox and thinking she's building her future. Citing statistics about the decline in serious reading among teens while declaring that "everything evolves, everything is improved" seems a rather curious way of rationalizing your intellectual laziness.

The fact that he/she wrote a decent editorial indicates that he's/she's better than his/her opinions. My respectful challenge to him/her (and anyone else who thinks as he/she does) is: be a leader, not a follower. "Everybody else" is never everybody else.

- Larry Carstens, English



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By Danny Lopez



the
OPTIMIST

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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.

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OPTIMIST
Fall 2013



INTERVIEW

Meet the Music Man



East Coast transplant Brian Heveron-Smith is making a difference with Poly's band.

By Octavio Tapia
Staff Writer

KYDS staffer Brian Heveron-Smith has been working with Poly's percussionists for some months now. He spoke to the OPTIMIST about his life as a musician. Here's what he said.

I'VE BEEN PLAYING MUSIC SINCE I WAS EIGHT. I'M 27 NOW, SO I GUESS THAT'S 19 YEARS.

My uncle is a musician. I always loved hearing him play when I was younger. I think he could sense that I was interested in music so he encouraged my parents to get me piano lessons.

I play percussion of all kinds, including drum set and orchestral stuff, and piano. And really basic mandolin/guitar/bass, but I mean really basic.

I went to the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY. I also traveled to West Africa for four months after that to study West African drumming. And I've studied with tons of private piano and percussion teachers over the years.

I decided to make music a profession as soon as I got cut from my middle school basketball team and realized I probably wasn't going to be an athlete.

I've toured with indie rock bands, jazz bands, classical orchestras, percussion ensembles, avant-garde groups, all sorts of stuff.

Most recently, I've been touring as a drummer with a swing band and playing piano at some improv comedy theaters in Los Angeles, accompanying musical improv teams. The swing band thing is fun and kind of bizarre - we basically only play at swing dances. That probably makes most people think of senior citizens, but believe it or not the crowds are mostly young. There are vibrant swing-dancing scenes in cities all over the world.

Musical improv is pure fun because it can go anywhere. We'll be playing an upbeat vaudevilian number one minute and then a cheesy 80s soft rock ballad the next. Also, there are some really interesting people involved in the musical improv scene in LA. Last week I met Ian Brennan, the creator of *Glee*.

I like variety in the music I listen to, perform and compose. I like variety almost to a fault. I'll never be a world-class concert pianist because I'll never have the focus to just work on my classical piano chops for 10+ years. But I've gotten to a pretty high level on several different instruments and with several different genres of music because of this, so I guess it's a double-edged

sword.

I started composing when I was 16. The first piece I wrote was this crazy/silly electronic piece, and then the second piece I wrote was for full wind ensemble. That score was probably such a messy disaster for my high school band teacher to deal with, but he was cool and agreed to conduct it at our spring concert.

Currently, I'm trying to break into the television business, hence the move to Los Angeles. I've been writing a lot of music for web series to make friends in the business and to get some credits under my belt. The past year or so I've been composing most of the soundtrack music for "Gayle," a series that has gotten some good press and garnered a small following.

On tour, I play a few hours a night but the rest of my day is spent driving and doing non-music stuff. When I'm in LA, I spend a lot of time teaching music but I don't perform as frequently as a musician.

I'm an improv theater nerd, so that more than fills the "I need to be on stage performing" void.

I tend to do recording and composing projects in "marathon" sessions. I might stay up recording tracks on a Friday night until my neighbors complain and then mix stuff until my eyes are bleeding and I'm falling asleep in my chair. It works.

Are musicians born or made? Well, you can learn to be musical. It's an acquired skill.

I tend to view everything in life that way because I don't like to put any limits on what I can or can't accomplish. It's all about where you decide to put your focus and learning how to focus properly. If you're putting a lot of energy into practicing a musical instrument but you're not seeing much improvement, then you're probably just not practicing efficiently.

It can often be hard for high schoolers to accept that efficient practice usually means attacking your weakest weaknesses, and attacking your weaknesses means you have to be vulnerable. High schoolers don't like to be vulnerable, which is totally understandable. I certainly refused to do anything I didn't see myself as being "naturally" good at in high school.

But it's really what you need to do to grow with anything. There's a great book called "The Talent Code" that gets into the specifics of why failure is an essential part of the growing process, for any skill - shooting a basketball, playing a musical instrument, singing, dancing, writing, whatever.

When I work with Poly's band, I try to walk the line of pushing students to see their potential and making sure that they are enjoying themselves along the way. Mainly I want them to realize that they are a part of something that is really special because it is so much bigger than themselves. Cliche, but it's true. Band is all about community. It's like that Jack Johnson song, "Yea it's always better when we're together." Is he still a thing?

I've mostly been working with the percussionists this past year. I've seen a ton of growth in them in just one year and I can't wait to see where they all go individually and as a group the following years.

SENIORS



PARROTS GO TO COLLEGE

But some stay close to home.



Boston University

Vivienne Chachee Mo

Columbia University

Alejandro Garcia

Cornell

Alejandro Garcia

Duke

Alejandro Garcia

Alberto Romero

Johns Hopkins University

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University of Southern California(USC)

Valentina De La Rosa
Asher Jeong

University of Pennsylvania

Fernando Moreno

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

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Valentina De La Rosa
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Mount Saint Mary's College

Preeti Chamber
Geyzi Moore
Angelica Rodriguez

San Diego State University

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Angelica Cortez
Allison Samonte
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Catherine Ramos

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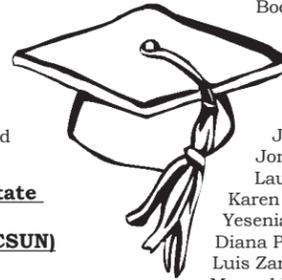
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Juan Quintanilla
Krissia Lazo
Guadalupe Dorado
Daisy Silvas
Gabriela Villalobos
Alberto Romero
Bryan Santiago
Eric Sac

Los Angeles Valley College

Eric Chavez

Mission Community College

Luis Miranda

California State University, Channel Islands

Gabriela Buenrostro
Angelica Rodriguez
Morgan Wynn
Jeannette Buenrostro
Darlyn Barajas
Ana Medina
Geyzi Moore
Monica Velasquez
Guadalupe Dorado
Kimberly Molliner
Liliana Ramos
Alejandra Barron
Stephanie Vega
Marilyn Chacon

California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA)

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Alejandro Garcia
Joana Reyes
Fatin Aylia
Angelica Rodriguez
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Gabriela Buenrostro
Darlyn Barajas
Angelica Cortez
Jeannette Buenrostro
Jennifer Menjivar
Reyna Rodriguez
Janet Cabrera
Jonathan Barrea
Liliana Ramos
Michael Garcia
Saul Coria
Jocelyne Escobar
Geyzi Moore
Carla Contreras
Elizabeth Segura
Kimberly Molliner
Zitlaly Macias
Lidia Barahona
Kimberly Moreno
Cindy Gutierrez
Guadalupe Pineda
Diana Perez
Natalya Aparicio
Marilyn Chacon
Cinthya Cervantes
Monica Velasquez
Jasmin Manzo
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Daisy Silvas
Gabriela Villalobos
Alberto Romero
Bryan Santiago
Eric Sac

Carnegie Mellon

Maureen Kang
Fernando Moreno
Daniel Larin
Alejandro Garcia
Guillermo Contreras

Johnson & Wales

Joana Reyes
Marilyn Chacon
Daniela Moran



TRAVEL

The Time of Their Lives

Every year Magnet Social Studies teacher Juan Morillo takes some lucky students to Europe. This year it was Spain.

A dozen Parrots spent 10 days in Spain over Easter break thanks to Magnet Social Studies teacher Juan Morillo.

"I started taking students to Europe about 10 years ago," Morillo said. "I thought Poly students should have the same opportunity as kids from middle class schools to do these trips."

By Walter Linares
Staff Writer

"Many of the kids have never been on a plane," Morillo said. "We want to broaden the students' horizons to other cultures and other ways of life. Ultimately, we just want the kids to enjoy themselves while they are learning."

That wasn't a problem.

"We were so excited to be in Spain," said senior Javier Zamora. "How many times can you say that you were in Spain? We were very blessed."

Morillo planned the trip, including hotel arrangements. "We know exactly what we are going to do beforehand," Morillo said. "This year we visited Barcelona, Madrid, Toledo, Granada, Alhambra and many other sites."

"Granada and Spain were gorgeous," said Zamora. "I can't stop saying that it's so gorgeous because it really is. It's breathtaking."

"Spain is special because each region is different," Morillo said. "They each have a different culture, a different language and a different way of life. Spain is a good destination if you want to experience the different lifestyles in Europe."

"For example, the south of Spain is an area that was influenced by the Arabs (the Moors), who lived there for over 700 years," said Morillo. "We also went to Barcelona, which is a completely different city because it is more cosmopolitan, on the ocean and a beautiful city."

"The food distinguishes each city from the others," said Zamora. "The weirdest thing I ate was fried squid. It turned out to be delicious."

"We visited the castle in Granada where kings and queens used to live," said Zamora. "It was very surreal. It's something I've never encountered before. When they say it's a palace or a castle, they don't disappoint you."

The group also visited the national palace in Madrid.



Photo Courtesy by Javier Zamora

BIG IN BARCELONA: AP Magnet teacher Juan Morrillo (green shirt) and his social studies class in Spain during Easter break.

"It had golden trim everywhere and looked really elegant," Zamora said.

"To travel from city to city, we used the bullet train or a bus," said Zamora. "We took a plane from Barcelona to Madrid."

"My favorite hotel was the N.H Podium in Barcelona," Zamora said. "That one was gorgeous compared to the other ones and everything was clean."

Students pay their own way. The cost fluctuates with the euro. This year each student spent around \$2,500.

"My parents paid for half of the trip and the other half was paid by savings from working at Kaiser," Zamora said.

For Zamora, the trip was definitely a learning experience.

"I learned how to get around," Zamora said. "That's helpful because you're not going to have someone guiding you everywhere."

College Essentials

It's not about the books anymore, it's about the life experience.

By Maureen Kang
Staff Writer

Seniors, it's not over. You have a lot more to do.

Did you know students prepare more for their first year of college than brides prepare for their weddings?

You don't want to pull up to your dorm room and find you have forgotten something.

What do you need to start adulthood? What items will assist you as you take on new experiences?

What will equip you for the world you've never seen?

In short, what are the college essentials?

First, everyone who attends college needs a laptop. No one brings a desktop to college anymore. Portable and efficient are the ways to go for college students.

If you want to keep up in today's fast-paced technological world, consider an iPad. Big or small, the iPad has powerful tools to assist students in class from pulling up PowerPoints to typing class notes.

Use an app called eReader as an alternative to big bulky books. Your shoulders and back will thank you.

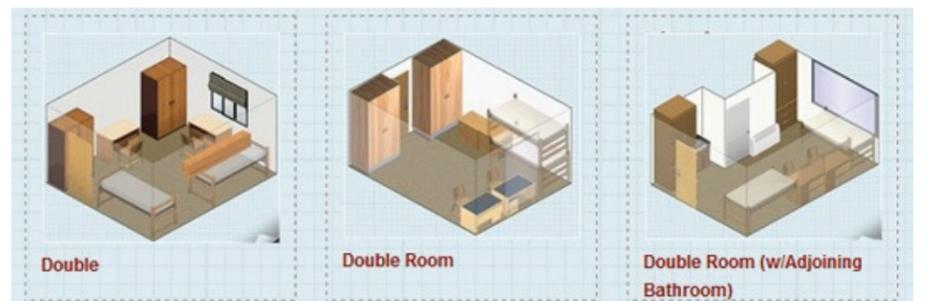
The iPad is a \$500 splurge, but considering its portability, efficiency, ease of use and 10-hour battery life, you'll get more than your money's worth.

The dorm essentials, on the other hand, are the real hassle.

A microwave and mini-fridge will save you and your dormmate during late night cram sessions and rushed slept-in mornings when you need a fast pick-me-up.

For your study, you'll need a desk lamp, mechanical pencils, pens, highlighters, pencil holder, stationary, scissors, stapler, white out, graphing calculator, notebooks, printer, printer ink, printer paper and flash drive. Optional are a lap desk, desk trays and stamps.

For organization, get a backpack or messenger bag, message board, push pins, hooks, hanging organizers, under-bed boxes, storage bins, a basic tool kit, a sewing kit, duct tape, a flashlight and batteries. Optional are laptop



sleeve, travel bag, bed lifts and a step stool.

A well-equipped medicine chest is almost as good as mom's chicken noodle soup.

You'll need bandages, cotton balls, rubbing alcohol, Neosporin, an ice/heat pack, q-tips, tissues, pain reliever, Tums/Roloids, cold medicine, cough drops, vitamins, allergy medicine, nail clippers and file, tweezers and a storage bin.

To make even the dreariest dorm shower feel like home, bring three towels, three hand towels, three wash cloths, one beach towel, shower flip-flops, shower basket, mesh sponge/loofa, shower cap, hair care products, body soap, shaving cream, razors, facial moisturizer, deodorant, scented body lotion, toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss, comb/brush, hair dryer and styling tools.

To personalize your room and have chill-out sessions after finals, bring a music player/iPod, headphones, speakers, television, digital camera, photos of friends and family, posters/art, wall decals, full-length mirror, area rug and a lounge chair.

A comfy bed allows good sleep and good sleep means good grades.

Don't forget two pillows, two sets of sheets, mattress pad, comforter, bedside lamp/

booklight, alarm clock, fan, and sleep mask.

Clean up your mess and tidy up with a hand vacuum, air freshener, trash can, trash bag, all purpose cleaners, paper towel, laundry bag/basket, laundry detergent, fabric softeners, stain removers, iron, mini-ironing board, dish towel, dish soap and scrubbing brush.

To whip up food for thought in an instant, take a coffee/tea mug, glasses, an insulated travel mug, a water bottle, dishes, microwave safe bowls, forks, knives, spoons, a cooking utensil kit, a utility knife, a small coffee maker, food storage containers, chip bag clips and Ziploc bags.

Tees and jeans might make the cut for you, but make sure your closet won't be missing these essentials.

Pack three formal outfits, one professional outfit, two weeks worth of underwear and socks, sweats/loungewear, swimsuit, light jacket, cold-weather pajamas, slippers and sneakers.

With these essentials, your transition to college life should be trouble-free. So make a list and check it twice before you head out the door. You don't want to start off life with your roommate by asking to borrow something.

CAMPUS

An “Iron Man” With Issues

By Adrianna Garcia
Staff Writer

In the first two “Iron Man” films, charismatic do-gooder Tony Stark (Robert Downey, Jr.) fought external villains.



But “Iron Man 3” has Stark struggling with internal issues that challenge his dual identities as man of iron and man of wealth.

The upgrade works.

After battling aliens in 2012’s “The Avengers,” Stark just wants to get back to normal with girlfriend Pepper Potts (Gwyneth Paltrow), who has moved into his Malibu home.

But post traumatic stress and anxiety attacks plague Stark’s perfect life, while a ruthless terrorist and a vengeful scientist with personal grudges add to his troubles.

All these conflicts test Stark’s self-confidence and his relationship with Pepper and the public.

Humorous body guard Happy Hogan’s health problems and a new friendship with an admiring young boy inspire Stark to turn over a new leaf.

The Marvel hero undergoes emotional and physical changes that help him transition from billionaire with tech toys to Iron Man in the flesh.

The movie isn’t all touchy-feely though.

“Iron Man 3” still delivers action-packed battle sequences with high-end explosions and technologically advanced suits for Stark.

Sharp-witted dialogue remains a staple for the Iron Man series and Downey turns in another convincing performance as the affable billionaire.

Guy Pearce plays Aldrich Killian, the corrupted science and business man on the verge of discovering the formula to self-healing, indestructible humans.

Celebrated actor Ben Kingsley plays the Mandarin, a terrorist with a grudge (so what’s new?).

Rebecca Hall (“The Town’s”) is Maya Hansen, Killian’s bright assistant who caught Stark’s eye at a 1999 New Year’s party seen in a flashback at the film’s beginning.

Director Shane Black’s (“Lethal Weapon”) sequel lives up to the previous Jon Favreau- directed films, who stars in the Iron Man movies as Hogan.

Black brought no major changes to the table, though “Iron Man 3” is a more sophisticated film than the previous two outings.

“Iron Man 3” relies more on message - strive to be the best you can - while the other two films were action-driven.

The film’s writing is fresh and witty, with smarter Stark remarks and comic conversations.

Not that it matters, of course. It’s Downey that keeps ‘em coming back. The rest is just job creation for the FX guys and fodder for Marvel super hero geeks.

Three Parrots Retire

[From Three, front page]

“What I love the absolute most about Poly is the school spirit,” Fidler said. “And I think that it has almost exclusively to do with Ms. McEwen. She is the biggest cheerleader that any school could ever hope for.”

“And Poly has an amazing staff. There’s a lot of united focus on making sure that the school spirit is up and it makes an enormous difference.”

Not everything is rosy, however.

“I think the environment for teachers has gotten much more challenging,” Fidler said. “The classes are too big. Even the Special Ed classes, which by law are required to be small, have gotten really large and I think that just makes it harder for everyone.”

“When I was in college, if I was at a lecture that had 100 people in it, I didn’t feel that I could learn as well and I think the same is true with high school,” Fidler said. “If you have too many people in a class with only one teacher, you won’t learn as well. I’ve got two daughters who are still classroom teachers and they put in so many hours grading papers and stuff and it’s just exhausting. So I think it’s not good for students and it’s not good for teachers.”

Beilinson agrees.

“Poly desperately needs money,” Beilinson said. “Maintenance has gone down to zero. We have lost many wonderful teachers. We need better textbooks and better working conditions.”

And are students worse than they ever were?

“I think the challenges are many for teachers and kids,” Fidler said. “But I think that there are wonderful people everywhere. There are wonderful teachers and wonderful students.”

“Most days I go home and say to my husband ‘You can’t believe the wonderful thing that happened today.’ Because there’s always one amazing thing that happens with one kid every day.”

“I’m going to miss those little miracle stories that I encounter every day,” Fidler said.

LIFE BEFORE POLY

Beilinson, born in New York, was raised in North Miami Beach, Florida and graduated from the University of Miami in 1969. She moved back to New York and worked for Readers Digest in Manhattan.

From 1985 to 1992, Beilinson taught grades two through ten at the Le Lycee Francais de Los Angeles in Woodland Hills.

Fidler, lived all over the world growing up, including Japan and Germany.

She got her Bachelor’s at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, where she majored in theater and education.

Then Fidler made a slight detour.

“I owned this record store,” Fidler said, “and someone came in the store and said they needed a singer and I auditioned and they hired me.”

Fidler wrote songs for the band and they made a music video that was on an MTV show called “the Basement Tapes,” a precursor to “American Idol.”

“We opened up for some national acts, like The Go Gos and Meatloaf,” said Fidler. “We were New Wave, kind of dance music, Pop/Rock.”

“People say I sound like Chrissie Hynde (singer/guitarist for The Pretenders) or 60s artist Connie Francis.”

Like Beilinson, Fidler is soon to be a grandmother.

“My daughter’s going to have her first baby in

June,” Fidler said, “so you know I’m going to be working as a grandma.”

Which proves that getting out of the classroom still doesn’t mean getting away from kids.

Note: retiring English teacher John Ebeling was unavailable for this story.

Poetry Night

[From Parrots, front page]

said. “So we did a poetry unit in class and I liked what the kids showed me.”

Matlen then decided to showcase the students and their poetry and invite parents.

“I didn’t want Poetry Night to be all English poems,” Matlen said, “so I asked AP Spanish teacher Lilian Bonar how she felt about doing Spanish poems with her AP kids. She liked the idea and that’s where it all came from.”

AP Spanish teacher Teresa Tirado and her students also contributed.

Some students had written several pieces of poetry in Matlen’s class and others wrote last-minute pieces.

“I wanted to see the poems just to edit and check for clarity and cadence,” said Matlen. “The students shared with their peers late last week and a couple of days this week.”

“There were some that I really liked. Angel Correa’s poem was really nice. Erick Sosa’s ‘The Dreamer’ was also. Jedri Emralino’s ‘Peace of Mind’ was really powerful.”

Correa’s untitled poem was about his love for music.

“I’m really into music, so I made it about that,” Correa said. “And then I thought about my girlfriend a lot while I was writing it.”

Junior Nicole Alvizu said “The Broken Soldier” was about her personal struggles.

“It was about my life, how I was bullied, how I got hurt and how I survived,” Alvizu said.

Bonar and Tirado had their AP students bring back a poetry-related assignment from first mester.

“They were to reference Borges’ way of writing poetry but make it their own,” said Bonar.

Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges famous short story “Borges y Yo” (Borges and I) was the role model for Barahona’s “Barahona y Yo.”

Junior Carlos Gonzalez wrote about love in “Pasión Prohibida.”

“I actually experienced it and I thought it’d be nice to write about it,” Gonzalez said.

Title I coordinator Yesenia Pleitez handled the logistics for the evening. About 50 parents attended.

“For parents, this was a way to understand their kids have really powerful feelings,” said Matlen. “I thought the evening went well.”

“We’re clear that there’s an audience at Poly for poetry,” Matlen said.

Band Wins Big

[From Music, front page]

an awards ceremony.

“Music in the Parks festivals take place all over the country at different theme parks,” said Poly senior and band Assistant Drum Major Diana Escobedo. “We usually opt for the Disneyland competition. This year we changed things a little by attending the Six Flags Magic Mountain competition.”

The band members performed at Rio Norte Middle School in Santa Clarita before changing out of their formal attire and heading to Six Flags for some fun.

Every Poly band member had to fundraise for the event by selling World’s Finest Chocolates.

“We pay an entrance fee for the competition and a separate fee for attending the theme park,” said Tinajero.

Poly band members spent the day waiting hours in line for rides, shopping for overpriced souvenirs

and eating expensive snacks

At the awards ceremony, the music directors, including Poly’s Stephan Isaacs, receive the score sheets on the band’s performances. The band spent fifth period the following Monday listening to the judge’s comments for improvement in next year’s concert band performances.

Each adjudicator had various certain criteria to look for during a band’s performance.

“Our cheers got louder every time the Poly’s band was announced winner,” said Escobedo.

The three trophies are in display in the band room.

The band is now preparing for their final performance at the 2013 graduation ceremony where they will play “Prelude and Fugue,” “Pomp and Circumstance” and “The Grand Old Duke of York.”

The Drumline and Colorguard are working on Spring Training to prepare for the 2014 marching season.

Poly’s Therapist

[From Strategies, front page]

the student’s family.”

“We have a really good team,” Mendez says.

“Our counselors see them and set up student success teams. We have had many kids affected by the student success teams. The goal is to help accommodate them in class and change some of their habits and some of their skills and it seems to work.”

Mendez, a 15-year Poly veteran, went to Reseda and John Burroughs High School, got his undergraduate degree at CSUN and went to Pepperdine for his masters.

“I changed my majors like five times,” Mendez says, “from anthropology to art to math to a Chem.

minor to finally ending up in psychology as a post-graduate.”

Mendez taught for about 10 years before becoming a psychologist.

“I taught Biology, Astronomy, Physics and Physiology. I was at Van Nuys for five years, Shark Elementary and East L.A. College.”

“I took it as far as I could go. Doing the same for 10 years gets tedious, so I decided to develop the other half of my brain.”

Mendez gets away from it all by sailing his own boat at Marina Del Rey, Catalina, Santa Cruz Islands and down to Long Beach. He also skis, plays tennis and scuba dives.

Student Interviews

[From Coming, front page]

twenty families, nearly three-fourths of the class, shared a story similar to Enrique’s.

“Students realized this quest to get to America and make a better life is universal,” Matlen said. “It’s very powerful, the personal testimony that they share.”

Most of the students’ parents had no better than a sixth grade education in Mexico. The personal aspect allowed students to really understand what their parents went through.

For some immigrants, America was difficult. Like Enrique’s mother, Lourdes, they had to work hard to survive in the big city and still send money to their families in Mexico.

Matlen said the goal of the assignment was to improve students’ narrative writing and make the assignment more engaging by making it a personal

narrative relating to immigration.

Students had to write a three to five page essay about their immigrant story that included two drafts and a final. In addition, the students did class presentations.

“The oral presentation helps students connect oral language with writing,” Matlen said, “because they can’t write it if they can’t say it. You’ve got to think it, say it, write it.”

Students devoted about nine days to the assignment, four in class and did not include last names in their essays.

“This year was more an in-depth writing assignment. Next year I will emphasize the research more,” Matlen said. “That’s what I’ve learned. I want to make sure we research these countries a little bit more.”

“But the results were beyond what I thought they would be. I was very pleased.”

SPORTS



BELLA LOPEZ

- finished fifth in the relay.
- finished sixth in the 800 at 2:23.46, a personal best.
- the only Lady Parrot to qualify last year for city finals.



CRISTINA RUIZ



ERICA MAGEE

- missed most of the season with a hamstring pull.
- Magee and Cristina Ruiz should be in the finals next year in individual events.



ASHLEY TINOCO

The girls 4x400 relay team

- the first to qualify for city finals in over ten years.
- broke a 20-year old school record at the city semi-finals with a time of 4:12.15.
- broke that record a week later at the city finals meet with a time of 4:11.47.

CRISTINA RUIZ ran the first leg,
ASHLEY TINOCO the second,
BELLA LOPEZ the third and
ERICA MAGEE was the anchor.

ON TRACK

These Lady Parrots led Poly's Track & Field team to a record-breaking season. This page represents a partial list of their successes.



ALEXIS CONTRERAS

- finished fifth in the 1600m and medaled with a time of 5:21.99, a personal best.
- finished 7th in the 800 with a time of 2:23.51, a personal best.
- qualified in both the 800 and 1600m races.

“ MY TOUGHEST OPPONENT IS ME, BECAUSE I DOUBT MYSELF. THE SPORT IS PHYSICAL BUT ALSO MENTAL. I WOULD SAY THE SPORT IS 80% MENTAL, AND THE REST IS PHYSICAL. I'M PHYSICALLY READY, BUT MENTALLY I HAVE TO WORK ”

NOTE:

LINDA GONZALEZ

- was the alternate who helped the team qualify for city.
- ran on the relay for most of the season because Erica was out with an injury.
- part of the winning relay team at league finals.



All photos by Lirio Alberto

ELENOA TAULAKI

- going to State for the second time.
- set a new school record with a throw of 39-11 at league finals.
- was Los Angeles City Section Champion with a throw of 38-00.
- improved her shot put throw this year by over three feet.
- finished third in City last year, eliminated in first round at state.

SPORTS

COACHES REFLECT ON SEASON

Poly baseball finishes 23-9 after a first-round 1-0 loss to Eagles, while Lady Parrots miss the playoffs for first time in 13 years under Peralta.

This year's team exceeded their capabilities.

Last year's teams had way more talent, but there were issues between players.

But this year's team made their mark. Looking back on it, I'm very proud of this team. It hurts that we're not still in the playoffs. But next year starts next week.

Senior Oscar Romo really exceeded expectations this year. None of us on the coaching staff expected a.) Romo to start for us, and b.) be the beast for us on the mound like he was. He had about seven or eight wins, two losses, and two saves. So Romo exceeded expectations. And junior Felipe Hernandez, our first baseman, exceeded expectations.

Alex George was our hardest worker. He was only a pitcher last year. He played at third base but he was a hell of an outfielder. Another one was our short stop, Alonzo Hernandez.

The ingredient missing this year was maybe a little more timely hitting. Other than that I couldn't have asked for anything more.

The loss that stands out is San Fernando. But I'll tip my hat to them. They got hits and we didn't.

We lost to Arleta (3-2 at Arleta), North Hollywood (6-5 at NoHo) and San Pedro (4-3). As a result, those three teams got a higher seed in the playoffs than we did. Those losses stand out more than the San Fernando loss because I know we're better than them. They also stand out because if we had beaten them, we would've gotten a higher seed.

San Fernando has a good shot at winning City. I believe it's going to go down to San Fernando and Cleveland.

Our team definitely has what it takes to win City. We're deep in the pitching department. It's always been about pitching and defense. So that's why the loss hurts more.

I'm always going to believe that my team is going to win. Always. If I don't believe that, then nobody else will. I always believe that we can beat anybody on any given day.

Now that I look back at it, what frustrated me this year was our Monday practices. It was a Monday theme with this group. Hopefully it'll stop next year. But Monday practices always dragged. Just like Monday at work drags. But Monday practices always dragged. It's a good thing we played Wednesdays.

This is my fourth year as Poly head coach and my first head coaching assignment. I was an assistant at Marshall for eight years, four with JV and four in Varsity. I was five years at San Fernando and two years at Roseville.

We also made the playoffs my first year here.

When I was an assistant at San Fernando, we made it to semi-finals. But that's the closest I've gotten. As a player, I've only made it to semi-finals.

I don't know if it gets harder or easier every year as a coach, but there are different challenges. Like next year's challenge is to find pitching. Cisneros looks like he can be a guy but we'll see. He has to develop over the summer.

Since I started coaching, the biggest change and most obvious is the bats. You go from a negative five bat to a negative three. So you have to manufacture more runs. So you bunt guys over, you play a lot of hit and run, you steal a lot of bases. You do all the little things to win you games, which is called West Coast baseball.

Like I said, next year starts next week. We start summer ball June eighth. Summer practice starts June third and work outs start on Tuesday.

Next year looks bright. All our hitting comes back. We're only losing five guys, four of which started all the time. We have four or five infielders coming back and two of three outfielders. So we're going to be alright.

I'm here about five thirty to five thirty every day, so I put in twelve hours every day, but that's what it takes. I knew that when I signed up for this job. I don't complain because that's what it takes to win. We're going to be good for a while.

I'm a Dodgers fan. But the players I like are Miguel Cabrera and Mike Trout. Those guys can hit. Mike Trout's going to be special.

I was born in Los Angeles, California. I still live here. I love the downtown area. I grew up in LA as well. I thought about moving to the Valley but it's not the same. I love my city.

I went to Marshall, then LACC, Cal State and got my degree at National University.

I will be at Marshall on Friday because they beat El Camino and I'll be supporting them. Two of the players I coached are coaching and I played with the head coach. I played outfield and caught a little bit.

By Danny Lopez
Staff Writer

The OPTIMIST asked baseball coach Gabe Cerna and veteran girls softball head coach Manny Peralta to talk about the season just ended. Here's what they told us.



Photos by Lirio Alberto

PARROT HEADS: Varsity baseball coach Gabe Cerna (left) and softball coach Manny Peralta.

Parrots Out of Playoffs

By Danny Lopez
Staff Writer

Poly couldn't produce a single run in its final game of the year, exiting the playoffs on

the wrong end of a 1-0 loss to host Bell Wednesday.

"Moreno pitched good yesterday," said Parrot head coach Gabe Cerna. "The loss is not his fault. He pitched very well. Moreno is going to do good in the next level."

Senior Josue Moreno pitched eight innings, allowing only two hits while striking out seven and walking four.

Bell senior Gabriel Ramos got the shutout win, allowing five hits and striking out four.

Losing pitcher was Parrot reliever Jason Cisneros, who gave up two runs and one walk in the bottom of the ninth, leaving with the bases loaded and Poly in trouble.

Poly reliever Oscar Romo gave up the hit to left field that brought in the game-winning run for Bell and ended the overtime scoring drought for both teams.

Poly ended the season in first place in the East Valley League at 10-2 and was 23-9 on the season.

We've made playoffs every year except for this year. So we've made playoffs 12 straight years.

What was missing this year was a sense of urgency.

This year, we changed the format for playoffs and how things were going to be done. So we were already behind in terms of respect from our league, respect from our own program in terms of what we've done. We weren't considered a contender compared to the big teams like Carson, Banning, and El Camino.

I already knew that we were in trouble with the way the new format is and trying to get the girls to understand that. We needed to win early, win the big games, we needed to win every game in league, and unfortunately the girls maybe didn't pick up on that because the old format, no matter what we did we were always in the playoffs. This new format, unfortunately, we're not in it structurally.

The make or break games were the two league games that we lost. I knew we were in trouble there simply because I knew Grant didn't have a great overall record and because of the format and the rules that we were under, Grant was going to be looking at a very low seed and that put us on a very dire situation.

The loss to Birmingham the very first game of the season - at the time it wasn't a big impact. We played well, we did well, but unfortunately we lost four to three. Looking back at the season, that game

could have been a difference maker. Losing to Banning, that could have been a make or break game especially the way the format went this year. We were beating Banning after five innings.

Other than that, we beat Taft, Bell and we beat teams we weren't supposed to beat. Going to Vegas to just playing in a tournament I think just helped us but really the two league games we lost were make it break it kind of games because I knew what kind of trouble we got ourselves into.

PLAYERS

I have several players that did very well this year that were not looked at this year.

Priscilla Loreda, a tenth grader, came from the JV team and definitely helped strengthened our pitching and excelled at the plate. I knew she was a good ball player but I didn't expect that from her.

Alexis Serafin, back up player last year from the varsity team, became a very good consistent defensive player at short stop. She struggled at times at the plate but overall did a decent job for us.

Dezerae Casares definitely improved her ability to play the game and became a much stronger outfielder for us and her bunting ability was definitely something we needed.

There are a lot of girls that did well this year. I think this was my most talented team since I've been here. From number one to number 15 on the roster, any one of them could have started any different game, which made it tough to pick a lineup every week. But I was very pleased with what happened with some of the players and we definitely have a lot of expectations for next year with twelve of the fifteen players coming back and literally having the whole core ready to start right now. I really do believe that the advances they made this year will show a lot next year.

The teams that we did play and happened to lose to - Banning, Carson, Birmingham - have all passed through to the second round. Banning is seeded number one, Carson number three. Those two teams can win the city title and are definitely true competitors.

Grant is going to the playoffs because of the mistakes we made. The rules say the league champion has to go to the playoffs.

Grant finished 11-1 in league and the only team they lost to was Poly. Unfortunately, for some reason we didn't play well against Arleta, so that gave us two losses in league, so we were 10-2.

The problem was simple. Grant's overall record was 11-11-1 but their league record was 11-1 so that meant that Grant didn't beat any team outside of our league. We went to the seeding meeting and a lot of the refs looked at Grant as not a strong team because their only wins were in league. The only tough teams Grant played were Arleta and us.

A lot of us felt that the only reason that Grant made the playoffs was because they won league. Only sixteen teams make the playoffs and they seeded Grant sixteen. If Grant got seeded fifteen then we would've automatically been seeded sixteen.

The problem at Poly, and it'll always be a problem, is we just don't have the pitcher to compete at the highest level against a Banning, Carson, or El Camino. That being said, if we ever do get that caliber of pitcher, or if the two pitchers I have coming back next year - Angie Ramos and Priscilla Loreda - can elevate their game to that level, then I think it could be possible.

We can hit, we can score runs, and I think we can play defense very well, so the key and what will always be the key is if we can ever get the pitcher to compete with those elite teams.

My biggest frustration this year was always pushing the team to work harder. I do think at times we did work, but it wasn't a daily situation. I didn't see us coming out every day to work harder. We would take two steps forward and one step back every once in a while and that one step back unfortunately caught up to us.

The hardest thing for me is the players are different now. They have a different approach to the game than I have. That gets in the way sometimes.

It takes me a lot longer to figure out these teams nowadays compared to the old days. Players now question everything. Back then players never questioned anything.

If I said to do it then they did it. Today the player wants you to explain it to them first before they buy in to doing it. That's the hardest part that I've seen in terms of coaching.

And not just the thirteen years I've coached in softball, but in the twenty-six years of coaching high school sports including football. I never got questioned before on what I do. Now I have to prove it.