

The Poly Optimist

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School

VOL. XCIX, No. 8

SERVING THE POLY COMMUNITY SINCE 1913

MARCH 2014

Lady Parrots at STEM Conference

By Joshua Penado
Staff Writer

Twenty Parrot coeds attended the Comision Femenil's 21st Annual Adelante Mujer Latina career conference at Los Angeles Valley College on Saturday, March 8.

The theme of the conference was "Latinas in STEM" (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). Around 400 students from San Fernando Valley high schools were in attendance.

"For the last 24 years, the conference has supported Latinas and tried to increase the Hispanic female college entry rate," said Title I coordinator Yesenia Pleitez. "The conference was started by a group of ladies in the San Fernando Valley."

Speakers at the conference included a mechanical engineer, an aerospace project manager, a research scientist, a biology professor, a nurse and a structural engineer. Many students were meeting an engineer or a university professor for the first time.

"We thought it was a good idea to focus on careers in Science and Math because of the high demand for those careers," said Pleitez.

Students attended two workshops of their choice and were then served lunch provided by the conference

Several colleges, including USC and UCLA, sent representatives and after lunch, students could either apply to one of the colleges or apply for financial aid.

Pleitez sent a flier to teachers asking for recommendations on who should go on the trip. Students were accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Each school was allowed up to 25 students.

"My goal was to take freshman, sophomore and junior girls, but ninth grade didn't send anybody, so tenth and eleventh graders went," said Pleitez.

CSUN grad Norma Padilla was the keynote speaker. Padilla, who works in the housing industry, talked about her challenges as a Latina who supervises men. Many resent taking orders from a woman, especially a Latina.

"No job is beyond your ability," Padilla said. "Work hard, establish a positive reputation and you will succeed."

Comision Femenil is a nonprofit, all volunteer group of professional Latinas based in Pacoima. In addition to the annual conference, Comision Femenil provides scholarships to high school seniors.

"Poly started going eight years ago and we have been to every event since," Pleitez said.



Photo by Lirio Alberto

A STAR IS BORN: Freshman knockout Narine Vapuryan. See KYDS pg 3.

Sync Sells Out

By Yesenia Carretero
Staff Writer

The annual Teachers' Lip Sync was a sellout, netting \$1900 for the CAHSEE breakfast.

"We use that money to help buy snacks and breakfast items for the students taking the CAHSEE," said Tenth Grade Counselor Temika Lewis, who was in

charge of the Lip Sync.

This year's show featured online voting for the first time and a number of crowd-pleasing performances.

Math teachers Monica Casillas, Azucena Hernandez, and Kathleen O'Connor took first place in the voting with a mashup of "Price Tag" (Jessie J), "Give Me Everything" (Pitbull) and "Don't You Forget About Me" (Simple Minds)

The group's choreography, taken from 2012's "Pitch Perfect," added spark to the first-place finish and their \$100 American Express gift card award.

Dean Hardip Singh, Biology teacher Mario Rivera, Math teacher Sergio Lopez, Spanish teacher Mario Quinteros and English teacher Dennis Madrigal danced and sang "Let it Rain" (Pitbull) and "I Like It" by Enrique Iglesias.

Parent center moms from Poly's Zumba class provided backup dancing

Katy Groskin opened the show with her "Wrecking Ball" video and stage performance of the controversial Miley Cyrus tune/video. Groskin also MC'd

[See Lip Sync, pg 3]

Unified Team Finishes Second

By Yesenia Carretero
Staff Writer

Poly's Unified basketball team lost a close 29-28 match to City Champion

Huntington Park and finished second in the playoffs held at Roybal High last Friday.

Huntington Park led 16-14 at the half. Poly won the second half 14-13, but still came up short.

Each Poly player got a trophy and a silver medal. Poly beat Venice 34-28 in a semifinal match earlier in the day.

Special education assistant Jorge Ramirez took sixteen Parrots to the finals, including five general ed and 11 special ed students.

"I have a roster of sixteen kids and all sixteen of my kids get to play," said special education assistant Jorge Ramirez. "Other schools keep their best five kids on the court."



Photo Courtesy of Jorge Ramirez
CHEER: Freshman Daniela Castro (left) and senior Daisy Cabrerias.

Where the Elite Meet

By Tanneshia Acosta
Staff Writer

A select group of junior Parrots is currently taking an intensive 12-week SAT prep course at Poly after school. Classes are held from 3:30 to 6 pm every Tuesday and Thursday in rooms 20, 30, 31 and 32.

Poly College Counselor Leona Warman is in charge of the program. Elite Educational Institute is providing instructors and materials for two math and two English classes.

"We've been helping students reach their academic goals for the last 27 years," said Elite regional director Jennifer Kim. "We offer solid preparation in fundamental academic skills, not just shortcuts or tricks to beat standardized test."

Poly and the KYDS program are funding the \$19,000 cost. Elite is offering Poly a sizeable discount from its \$1,200 per pupil fee.

Each student paid a \$20 entrance fee to take the course. Students with perfect attendance will receive a full refund.

"If a student has to pay at least something, that student will care enough not to blow it off as if it were free," Warman said.

Additional restrictions apply, Warman said. Each student signed a contract agreeing to meet the program's expectations. Students who fail to do so will be ineligible to participate in Class of 2015 Senior Events, including Prom and Grad Night.

A minimum GPA of 2.6 was also an eligibility requirement

Elite originally intended to offer two classes with 20 students each,

but Poly Principal Ari Bennett agreed to make the course available to every interested student. Students had to have a minimum GPA of 2.6

"This is our first year teaching SAT-R, said Elite Regional Director Jennifer Kim, "but we helped college essay workshop last year."

Course work includes vocabulary memorization, weekly lesson packets, quizzes and tests each week

"I believe that this test prep will make a difference in their scores," Warman said, "but it all depends on the student. They have to attend all of the classes and do all the homework."

"We know that there is no limit to our student's potential," said Kim. "And we're here to help them realize it."

Break-in Suspects Arrested

Student Store is hit for third time this school year.

By Joshua Penado
Staff Writer

Two suspects, one a Poly graduate, were arrested shortly after breaking in to Poly's Student Store Saturday night around 11 pm and stealing potato chips.

"They broke in through a window and the alarm went off," said Student Store Manager Jina Bartulo. "The police arrived in around three minutes and we got all our merchandise back."

The silent alarm goes off 10 seconds after a break in.

Police identified the suspects with fingerprints. Two additional suspects remain at large.

"I know there was an adult involved in the recent break-in," said Bartulo. "The adult went to jail."

No money was taken. "They couldn't really get to the money," said Bartulo. "It would take ten people to take that safe. It is heavy."

Poly assistant principal Jamille Kenion was the first administrator on the scene and spoke to police.

The Saturday robbery was the third during the current school year.

"The other two were during summer break," said Bartulo. "I wasn't worried about what was taken because our main profits were already locked up in the safe."



Photo by Nicolette Reneau

Light on her feet

Talented junior gets a nod from Joffrey ballet.

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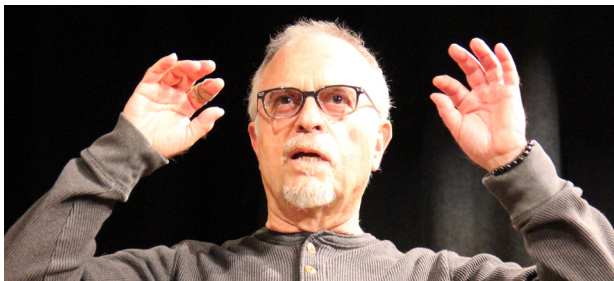


Photo by Lirio Alberto

You won't see me

Veteran English teacher Thom Savino is retiring.

FACULTY - page 6

OPINION

LETTERS

Re: “Talk, Don’t Type” (Feb 2014)

Dear Editor,

I agree with what this editorial is saying 100%. All these social networks and devices our generation uses creates a barrier between us and the other people in our lives. Social media takes the fun out of everything. When you’re with your friends, you don’t even talk, or hang out, or even have fun anymore. Everyone just sits down and texts, gets on Instagram, and goes on Twitter, etc. Social media is taking away many things we can experience and keeps us from all the fun that we could really be having if we interact with others face to face, not through a screen.

- Diego Gonzalez, junior

Dear Editor,

I agree with your idea on social networking because I know of people that are completely different in person that what they act like online. I have also seen on the news on how teenagers no longer talk in person and they only use social networks like facebook, twitter and many more. When people text they can’t see the person they are talking to so they can’t see their expressions or their tone when they speak which can lead to someone misinterpreting something that was said. Teenagers should hang out in person and not over the internet.

- Rudy De Leon, junior

Dear Editor,

I agree with your position about people lacking face-to-face communication. As the span of electronics has grown, the communication has definitely diminished. Technology has advanced us and people in education use texting language which impedes learning. People today mostly worry about what’s on social media and don’t even recognize that precious time is passing and nobody actually holds a conversation. The daily communication in this time is texting, commenting on photos, and also Facetiming.

- Jesus Rodriguez, junior

Dear Editor,

I can’t help but to agree and disagree with you. Pretty oxymoronic I know. It is true that people have more followers and friends on social network than they actually talk to in person. But there are also people that only have the exact amount of friends on social networking accounts. I personally find it ridiculous for people to have a thousands followers or a thousands friends on social networks. Like seriously, why so many? They probably only know at least 70 out of those 1000 and probably only talk to, at a personal level, with 20 out of the 70. I don’t know, that’s just my opinion on the subject.

- Moises Flores, junior

EDITORIAL

Video Games, Not a Waste

All my life I have heard that video games are a waste of time, that they do nothing but keep you busy for a few hours. But doesn’t everything just keep you busy for a few hours? With that logic, everything’s a waste of time.

I think it is wrong to say that video games are a waste, for there are elements and themes in video games that can teach you hard life lessons and morals that only few things can.

Take “The Last of Us,” for example. “The Last of Us,” released in 2013, is a video game about a man and a teenage girl struggling to survive in a post-apocalyptic Earth infested with a parasitic disease that turns humans into “Zombies.”

While the premise sounds familiar, it’s totally different. “The Last of Us” makes you feel the struggle and pain the two characters face. The

relationship between the two grows stronger with every struggle they face together, and while they meet people along the way, no one is truly nice to them, and in a world where everything has gone to crap, you can’t blame them.

“The Last of Us” makes you think about life after a disaster. The game grabs you and puts you in the story of two individuals who have lost all hope, and it shows you that together, they can survive the greatest of all atrocities. That’s true in real life too.

If humanity would stop blaming each other and instead, help and shelter one another, the world would be a better place. If we don’t help each other, if we continue the path we’re on, we too may be headed for an apocalyptic future. We will have ourselves to blame for our downfall.

Don’t take it from me, take it from a game.

The Core of the Matter

Colleges complain that high school graduates lack college-level writing skills. The new Common Core State Standards promise to put more emphasis on writing.

Now the College Board announces it will boot the much-hated essay portion of the SAT beginning in 2016.

“We commit today that the redesigned SAT will be more focused and useful, more clear and open than ever before,” said College Board President David Coleman.

Not only will the 25-minute timed essay be optional, but math questions will now relate to real-life problems, such as how much money you can save with a 15% coupon at the mall. The reading sections will drop archaic words like superannuated and antiquated too.

The College Board hopes these changes will show a truer picture of what students really know as opposed to seeing what weeks of cramming information can produce.

But dumbing down the SAT won’t improve student performance and knowledge overall. At this rate, no one will even cram for it anymore.

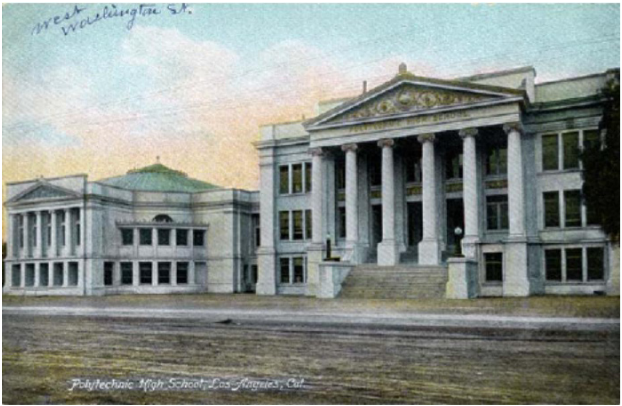
The Scholastic Aptitude Test is supposed to determine whether a student is ready for college. So it should be at the college level.

The College Board’s revamped SAT comes at the wrong time. The Board should have waited until everyone had gotten used to the Common Core State Standards.

If Common Core really does improve student learning, then students will do better on entrance exams like the SAT.


The 2400 point SAT should be a piece of cake for future Common Core seniors. But now we’ll never know.

Most high school students will love the 800-point deduction because it is 800 points they don’t need to worry about. But are the remaining 1600 points enough to determine the probability of success in college? We’ll see.



the OPTIMIST
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KYDS held a Talent Showcase recently and what a thrill it was. Freshman Narine Vapuryan’s vocal chops stole the show.
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This tiny dancer has been doing it since she was a kid. Now she’s been accepted to the prestigious Joffrey Ballet. Her life is about to change.
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Many an English teacher has walked the halls of Poly, but few boast Thom Savino’s extra curricular skills. Better be nice to him.
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What happens when aw shucks Ellen Degeneres hosts the Academics? She calls out for pizza, of course.
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Poly’s basketball boys made it all the way to the semis before getting tripped up by some Spartans. Shortly thereafter, the boys did a 3 OT thrilla.
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When it comes to winning ball games, youth counts for a lot. Cerna’s squad has plenty of it and good pitching too.
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Inconsistency has been costly for the volleyball boys. They opened the season with four losses. But there are good times to come, coach Aghassy says.
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Softball coach Manny Peralta has his dream team of seniors. All he needs now is the bats that will put Poly deep in the post season.
By Christine Maralit



the
OPTIMIST

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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.

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EDITORIAL POLICY

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

Join the staff
OPTIMIST

See Mr. Blau
rm 14



PERFORMANCE



TALENT: Seniors Miranda Brown (above left) and Crystal Cruz and junior Giselle Rodriguez (right) performed at the KYDS' Talent Showcase.

KYDS GOT TALENT

By Michael Panneton
Staff Writer

Newcomer Narine Vapuryan, a freshman, wowed the crowd with her interpretation of Destiny's Child's "Stand Up For Love" and won the vocal competition in the KYDS' Talent Showcase, held Tuesday in the auditorium

Junior Petra Hernandez won the band competition with an original, "Broken Love." Drill Team won the dancing competition. A panel of four judges from media industries such as television and music scored the performances and picked the winners. Other band category performers included KYDS quartet Anti-Machine doing an original, "Life of a Teen." Members include sophomores Alan Interiano and Anthony Saban and seniors Mike Derderian and Daysi Rosales. Civilized Anarchy did an original entitled "By Day, By Night." Members include Interiano, Saban, Derderian and senior Kate Martinez. Senior Eric Sosa played guitar with a backing track. Dance crew "Romerio's Angels" performed to a Beyonce mashup. Members include juniors Giselle, Vanessa and Jose Zuniga and sophomore Kimberly Tompoco and Summer Osario. Seniors DeAnthony Hawkins and Anthony Melendez danced solo, as did Zuniga and Daniel Gaona, who danced to "Sail" from Awolnation. Vocal competition entrants included junior Audriana Wilson performing Alicia Keys' "If I Ain't Got You," Miranda Brown doing "Your Song" by ???, Crystal Cruz singing "Creep" by Radiohead and Angel Aguilar doing "Wake Me Up" by Avicci, with Izzy Bourne on guitar. The next competition for the three Poly winners will take place at Paramount Pictures in Hollywood, where the categories include dance, DJing,



rap/emcee, instrumental/band, spoken word and vocal. The showcases as part of LAUSD's Beyond the Bell Take Action leadership campaign that encourages children to take part in extracurricular activities, including dance, band and theater, to stay out of trouble and become well-rounded members of the community. Beyond the Bell oversees all of the district's out-of-school programs such as after-school and weekend activities.

ALL PHOTOS
LIRIO ALBERTO

LIP SYNC

[From Sync,
front page]



(from left)
Tamika Lewis,
Monica Casillas,
Kathleen O'Conner
and Sergio Lopez.

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the show and did a quick change of clothes between performances. "I started planning the Lip Sync in the beginning of February," Lewis said. "You announce that it's coming and start feeling around for people that are interested in performing." The biggest challenge is coordinating rehearsals and encouraging people to find time to practice and organizing the music, Lewis said. Lewis had a lot of help. Former Poly teacher Ami Showalter and Groskin helped with production. Groskin coordinated the lighting. "Showalter was just great with coordinating and helping with rehearsal and helping with the big finale," Lewis said. "Everyone in the tenth grade center helps with pushing ticket sales and supervision and it's really a collective effort. I'm very pleased with the turnout." English teacher Jeff Herrold suggested the use of PollEverywhere.com to tabulate online voting. Technical difficulties restricted the voting to 160 students. "It was our first time using it, so next year we'll know how to optimize it so it can be used a little bit better so that all the students are able to vote," Lewis said. "Next year we'll tackle it a little bit better. An awards ceremony in April will honor tenth grade students with most improvement. "It's kind of like an additional event that we use the money we raised for," Lewis said. "We have like an ice cream social." The CAHSEE is March 18 and 19. About 710 students are expected to line up for pre-test snacks.



JOCELYN
GARCIA



BY NICOLETTE RENEAU. PHOTOGRAPHY BY LIRIO ALBERTO AND NICOLETTE RENEAU.

She Came to Dance

When the OPTIMIST found out about Ms. Garcia’s acceptance to Joffrey Ballet we knew we had to talk to her. This is what she said.

When and how did you first get introduced to ballet?

My first time on stage was at the age of four, and well, I haven't been off since. I was not introduced to ballet until the age of six. It was my mom's "I'm putting my daughters in ballet lessons" phase. I remember being absolutely fascinated with my first lesson. Seriously, I couldn't stop celebrating the moment with my twin sister. After every combination my sister and I would look at each other and scream in joy. You don't even want to know what happened when we received our leotards and tutus. I continued ballet for a little while and suddenly completely shifted my attention to acting. My twin sister and I went to two acting schools, one in Los Angeles and the Santa Clarita School of Performing Arts. We booked our first commercial at the age of eleven and booked our first agent at the age of thirteen. With our successful auditions I was sure that acting was what I was going to do for the rest of my life. That was until I completely stopped acting and decided to focus all my attention on dance. I danced with my school's dance and drill team from the age of 8 until 14 becoming captain at both schools. It was when I came to Poly that I had to give up performing for my school and began my ballet training at the Debbie Reynolds Dance Studio in North Hollywood, CA. Sacrificing performing along side my twin sister in the school's drill team was one of the most difficult decisions I had to make, but I'm extremely happy with myself for following through with it.

Is anyone else in your family artistic or a dancer?

Walk into my house and you'll find six musicians, three dancers, and three Colorguard members. Of course most of us doubling or in the case of my twin sister, older brother Michael, and I, tripling on the activities. Every member of my family at some point has played or continues to play an instrument. My older brother played various instruments here in the Poly Marching Band and in the Taft High School Marching Band, my little sister plays trumpet in the Poly Marching Band, and I have been part of the Poly Drumline these past three years. My twin sister and I have been dancing along side one another since we were four, and my older brother used to perform in the Disneyland Parade's as a dancer and stilt walker. My brother was also the instructor of an Independent Winterguard team where the three of us competed along side each other for two years. It was really nice performing next to another sibling besides my twin sister for once, not that I mind performing with Jacquelyne. Although my family is very artistic, I'm the only one who wants to pursue a career in the arts. It's very strange for your average Poly Magnet student to not say they want to be an engineer. And even though I plan on applying to dance school's after high school, in case my perfectly planned imaginary future doesn't go as planned, I'm making sure to prepare myself just as well academically for my dream universities. My life is a challenge: Left Brain vs Right Brain, Pointe Shoe vs SAT, Happiness vs Practicality.

How many years have you been doing ballet? Who were your instructors and where do you practice?

I have been training at the Debbie Reynolds Dance Studio in North Hollywood, CA for two years in Ballet, Pointe, Conditioning, Jazz, Turns, and Hip-Hop. My regular schedule is nine hours a week, four days a week. That's after school and after band practice of course. I have four instructors which include Patsy Metzger for Jazz and Conditioning, Kiera Hansen for Ballet and Pointe, and Rowdy Metzger who teaches my master classes in Turns and Ballet and who also instructed my private lessons when I was preparing for summer program auditions. Privates are my favorite because all the attention is focused on you, meaning every flaw will be found and fixed.

How prepared do you think you are for the Joffrey in terms of your training?

Fifteen is considered extremely late for ballet dancers. Ideally you'd want to begin at the age of 6. Had I continued with ballet instead of switching into acting when I was younger, I wouldn't feel as intimidated or discouraged at times in becoming the professional ballet dancer I aspire to be. Luckily, I have been my strongest motivation these past two years of training. Of course, having the natural ability and body for ballet has been an enormous contributing factor to my successful training, but if it wasn't for that little voice in my head constantly stating "I will be a professional dancer" every second of the day, I don't think I'd be where I am today with my training. I honestly have days where my future is all I can think about. Due to my determination, I have accomplished things in a much shorter time than most dancers. I pay full attention in class, I accept corrections and do all I can to apply them, and I spend hours researching dance, terminology, injuries, and healthier diets for my personal interest. My teachers notice how determined I am to improve, which is one of the reasons why within only a year of Ballet training was I allowed to move up to Pointe, where two months later I performed along side the girls who had been en pointe for many years longer than I had. Many of my friends like to refer to pointe as "dancing on my toes" which is exactly what I do. Does it hurt you ask? Everything hurts, it's part of being a dancer or any athlete in general. Sure, dancing on your toes is abnormal and sounds absolutely terrible, but you don't feel the pain when you love it as much as I do. Luckily, Pointe has not been a painful experience for me. To this day the worst thing that I've gotten from pointe are foot cramps. Lucky, lucky me. Besides achieving Pointe, which was a huge accomplishment for my dance career, an even bigger accomplishment was getting accepted to the Joffrey Ballet School's Summer Intensive for this upcoming summer. I know I don't have ten years of training in my resume like most of the dancers at this program will, but with my hard work and dedication, I know I will be able to keep up with them just fine this summer.

How did you hear about the Joffrey and what was the application process like?

While training in dance you consistently hear about amazing dance schools such as the Joffrey Ballet School. Dancers only dream of studying at one of these schools and I feel very fortunate to be able to study with the Joffrey this upcoming summer. With world-renowned schools, an audition is required in order to decide on eligibility and acceptance. I auditioned for four summer programs this summer. Programs with the San Francisco Ballet School, The School of American Ballet, The Juilliard School, and finally the Joffrey Ballet School. I auditioned for San Francisco, School of American Ballet (SAB), and Joffrey at a live audition throughout the month of January and I auditioned for The Juilliard School through video because they weren't hosting live auditions in Los

Angeles. The audition process is a full hour and half ballet class en pointe with that school's Master Instructors. Going into an audition is very intimidating, nerve-wracking, but overall a wonderful learning experience. Taking a class with an unfamiliar instructor is a bit unnerving because you don't know what to expect. If their technique is different, you must be able to adjust in a matter of seconds. The pressure is good for me. I see it as a way to prepare me for future auditions.

Have you performed ballet before? What and where?

My dance studio's focus is not Ballet, therefore, annual ballet's such as "The Nutcracker" is not performed every December like most Ballet School's. I have not yet had an opportunity to perform a ballet, and I seriously cannot wait until I get the opportunity to do so.

What ballets have you seen?

I've seen many wonderful ballets from the comfort and privacy of my home such as Swan Lake and The Nutcracker. Unfortunately, I have not seen any ballets live. One of the main reasons being the fact that I don't live in New York City where the big name companies such as the New York City Ballet, The Joffrey Ballet, and American Ballet Theatre perform repertoire weekly. As soon as I move to New York, I will go watch five ballets in a row.

Which ballets do you admire the most? What ballet composers are your favorites?

I tend to admire the Ballet company more than the ballet itself. Every company has the same repertoire, it's the way they interpret it that fascinates me the most. The way the New York City Ballet only performs Ballets in the technique of George Balanchine, the founder of the NYCB, is absolutely incredible. The way the Joffrey Ballet mixes ballet technique with contemporary technique is considered very avant-garde. It's the experimentation and exploration of these companies that capture me and draw me to perform with them in the future.

Tell me about your first two years of training. What techniques did you develop and what steps did you have to learn? What other skills did you pick up along the way?

Time flies when you notice improvement. Since beginning training, I've increased my flexibility immensely, I've turned my weight into muscle, I've cracked bones I didn't know existed, as well as pulled muscles over and over again. Learning Ballet terminology the first year literally felt like I was learning a complete different language. Unless you have Rosetta Stone, we all know how difficult it is to learn a language at an older age, but now the French is second-nature. Ballet technique is very demanding and extremely specific. Of course, it took me a long time to perfect one move, and even now there's still room for improvement. My naturally swayed back also isn't helpful when I'm trying to form a completely straight line down my core during a pirouette. These are all things I had to work for and it feels very gratifying to compare the dancer I am today, with the dancer I was two years ago.

What do you know about the history of ballet? What about renowned female dancers?

The evolution of ballet is truly admiring. The evolution of the New York City ballet for example, which is my favorite company, was founded in 1948 by George Balanchine and Lincoln Kirstein. The only way into the company is through the School of American Ballet, which is where all dancers of the company trained before making it into the actual company. George Balanchine began training dancers at SAB in 1948 where he created his technique known as "Balanchine Technique" only used by the NYCB, and composed large numbers of ballets for the company, which continue to be performed today. One of my biggest ballet influences is Tyler Peck, a principal dancer with the New York City Ballet because she began her dance training at the age of 13, which is also considered very late. The actuality that she started late and is now a principal dancer is such a genial motivation for me, who also started late. Another female dancer who is also a huge motivation for the same reason is Misty Copeland, a soloist with the American Ballet Theatre who also started at the age of 13.

Ballet is very physically demanding and a high pressure art. What character traits are brought out in you as a result?

Once you commit to ballet, nothing else matters. You must be willing to change your lifestyle for the demands of the art. Since beginning my dance training, I've had to change many aspects of my life. I had to say good-bye to my seven years of drill team and to Winterguard, because although I juggle an intense magnet curriculum, band, and dance, there was absolutely no room for more. I changed my diet in order to stay fit for ballet. Meaning, no awesome snack-filled movie nights. Unless you consider water with Chia seeds and stretching tutorials a "snack-filled movie night." I had to replace clothing and Converse with leotards and pointe shoes. Soreness, floor burns, joint pain, and pulled muscles are my best friends. I am now constantly covering my body with bandages, icy hot, and bags of frozen vegetables. (They mold better than icepacks). I eat a banana every single day. And lastly, I now overuse the phrase "Sorry, I have dance." I have dance nine hours a week, and this summer it will turn into nine hours a day. Dance is a huge sacrifice, but it's one I'm completely fine with because it's what I utterly love the most.



FACULTY

INTO THE MYSTIC

Sometimes veteran English teacher Thom Savino works on a different level.

By Zein Delgado
Staff Writer

Veteran faculty member and English teacher Thom Savino is retiring in June after 22 years as a Parrot. We couldn’t let him leave without one last story. Here’s part of what he told us.

Heading West

I was born in 1950 and raised in Brooklyn, New York.

I got a bachelor’s degree in film at the New York Institute of Technology, one of only 17 schools in the country that had film, radio, and television. I was doing a radio show called “Dead Air” in college in the early 70s with my radio partner, Frank Cotolo.

One of our college buddies, Bobaloo Mandel, made it big in California writing for TV shows like “Happy Days” and “Laverne & Shirley.” Since all three of us were good buddies, we thought he was going to help us.

So when we graduated in 1978, we went to California. We had experience writing comedy for radio, but nobody cared. My partner went back, but I stayed and became a substitute teacher while I was pursuing my film career.

I lost a wife on the way. She came with me to Hollywood, but she didn’t want to. It caused a lot of other issues. We weren’t really made for each other, and we divorced. Then I met my current wife here in Los Angeles.

I discovered I liked substitute teaching and decided to become a regular teacher and got my credentials at CSUN and became an English teacher.

I was fortunate that a principal at Poly was once my current wife’s assistant principal at Roosevelt High School in East L.A. She allowed me to do student teaching here while substitute teaching, so I didn’t have to quit my job to do student teaching. She offered me a contract and I took it because I wanted to be at Poly.

The Poly Years

I started here in 1992. We went through a period where we were called a LEARN School. That supposedly meant we were going to do our own things rather than just being told what to do, but that didn’t pan out. In the newest systemic change, we became a Pilot School and it looks like the last change I’ll see. The teachers have more say in what’s going on, but they also have more responsibility.

My favorite years were with the Humanitas program. At one point, I was the coordinator. It was THE Small Learning Community, and it was kind of what the model became for all Small Learning Communities. The change I find most unfortunate for Poly is that they did away with Humanitas to create other Small Learning Communities that don’t work. That’s been very upsetting to me.

That was the last straw for me, but I had to make a living, and teaching was my living, so I remained until now. Throughout my stay, the demographics of Poly have stayed very similar. It has always been around 90% Latino. We went through a period where we had a lot of Sheik students, and then there was a period of more Filipino students, then Armenian students, but it was always 90% Latino.

Poly has had six principals since I’ve been here. The first one I don’t remember. The next was Ms. Birch, then Ms. Clark, then Ms. Jan Fries-Martinez, then Mr. Loera and then Mr. Bennett.

Humanitas

The Humanitas program was like a family. The History, English and sometimes even Science teachers all had the same students, so we planned things for the students. I got very close with Mr. Jerry Lee, who still teaches here, and Ms. Patricia Deitch. She had a child and left to become a full time mother. Lee, Deitch and I were the core Humanitas people. Poly was multi-track, so I was C Track along with Lee and Deitch and we became very close.

Some bad things have changed for the better. The enrollment was so high we had to have three tracks. Teachers had to travel during the day. A teacher would have to have some classes in one room and a couple of other classes in another room. That was hard, and it caused a lot of problems.

When enrollment went down, I was glad, because it was very difficult to work that way.

Parrots

The students here at Poly are definitely my greatest pull to do this job, beyond a doubt. It’s the reason I kept doing this for so long. I just love the Poly students, I really do.

In 2004, I became the 11th grade class sponsor, which made me the senior class sponsor for 2005 because I took those kids, and I was the senior sponsor for 2006 as well. Those years, 2004 through 2006 as the senior class sponsor, are the most memorable to me because I was really close to the students. Putting on the Prom, all the major senior events we had to put on. It was a lot of work but incredible fun, very energetic. That is a big memory of mine, being the senior sponsor.

Style

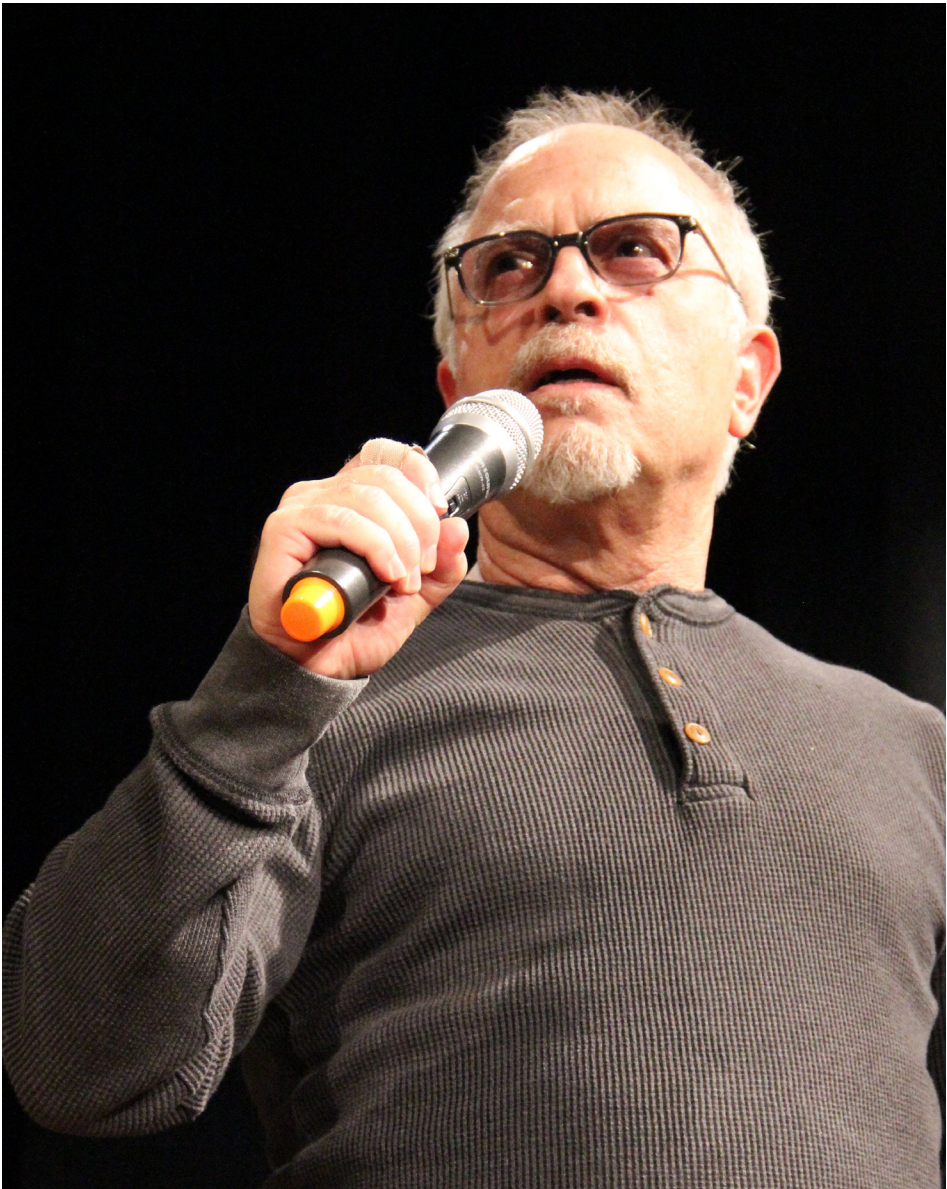
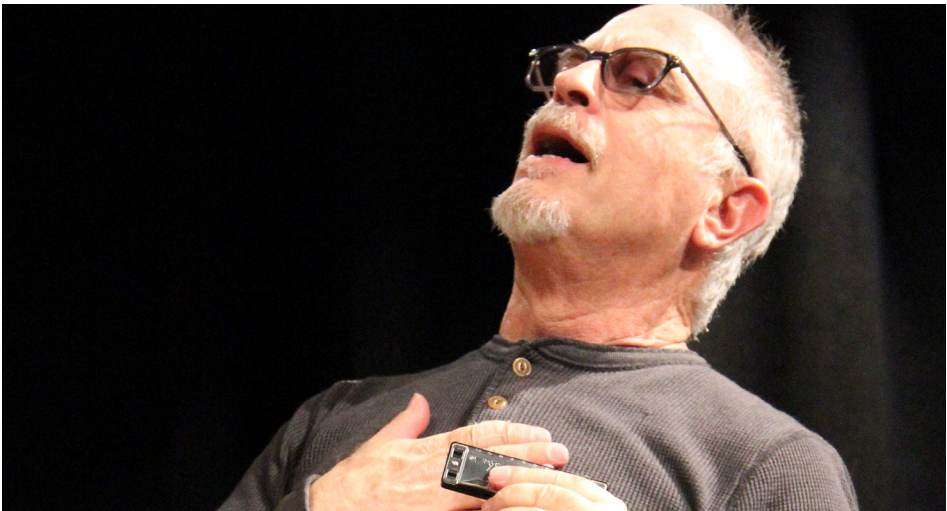
I have a very different style of teaching because of the Humanitas program. Mr. Jeppson asked me once, “What was it like being a Humanitas teacher?” and I said it’s kind of like being the Navy Seals of education.

They told us upfront that we were Humanitas and didn’t have to answer to any one but fellow teachers in the program. If counselors were giving us problems, we’d call the program, if administrators forced us to use textbooks, we’d call the program. We didn’t have to use anything other than what we developed with fellow teachers. Don’t listen to the administration if they’re giving you any kind of problems, we were told.

The school administrator at the time was all for the Humanitas program. She understood the philosophy and was on board with it and we reigned. But when administrators leave or their term is gone, other Administrators that are not so hot about the program want you to do other things. But you’re still in the program, so you don’t listen. But you can kind of develop an unfortunate mindset of “doing my own thing.” That’s where I came from, and certainly over the years it has caused problems. It’s definitely one of the reasons I am leaving now too, because I am not really in line with all the changes that are coming up.

Yoga & Shamanism

I discovered yoga in 1996 and that was a life changing experience. I immediately fell in love with



it. It awakened me and made me aware of things about myself. I wanted to use yoga and transmit it to as many people as possible.

There was a period where I got my yoga teaching credentials and started a class at Poly with the students at lunch a few days a week. It was very popular. Then they put in a new PA system that totally destroyed the Yoga class and that was the end of that.

I also taught yoga to teachers in the teachers’ cafeteria after school for about a year. And I taught at Glendale Yoga. A couple of years ago, I tried to open my own yoga studio in Burbank, but there are too many rules in Burbank about parking and so it didn’t happen.

So that’s the yoga story, but I do like to incorporate a lot of the techniques that I have learned in yoga for the students to help with anxiety the students have. I show them some breathing techniques as well to keep them calm.

My shaman training was interesting. Five and a half years ago, my psychiatrist and fellow Buddhist practitioner announced that she was going to start a five-year training in Shamanism. I knew her for many years. She was the one who hypnotized me into my past life. Her name was Raven Lee.

She was starting this training with a Mexican woman whom she knew, so when I heard she was starting this class I jumped to do it right away. It was a five-year commitment, but I only took two years. It was the hardest thing I ever did in my life, being out in the desert for two weeks a year and then

every week meeting the group in Los Angeles to do trainings.

The trainings in the desert were intense. We would eat and sleep on the border of Mexico in San Diego County. That was by far the hardest thing physically and spiritually. It was like a psychological bootcamp, like a crash course in grief, pain and misery to really crack you open in order to take on the positive energy of being a Shaman.

There are many wonderful things that I’ve learned. It definitely worked, but two and a half years in, I began to have experiences. The psychological nature of it had prepared me somewhat, but I was not prepared for the things that were happening, like seeing spirits, and telling me specific things about student in my classroom that turned out to be 100% true.

It blew my mind. The experiences come without warning. If I was more psychologically ready for it, I may have continued, but it reached a point where I said to myself “If I’m going to remain sane in the real world, I can’t keep doing this.” So I stopped.

I still have experiences, but now I look at it like opening a door, going inside, liked what’s in the door, got scared after a while, but fortunately it was a door and I could still leave, but occasionally that door opens again and things come out.

When I retire and I don’t have so much stress as a teacher, I may pursue that again. What I may focus on again too is hypnotizing because it has benefitted some people, so I may do that again.

MEDIA



Google Image

MAMA’S AND PAPA’S : Catering for the 86th Academics was handled by a local pizza joint. Host Ellen Degeneres gets help from Brad Pitt handing out slices.

Many Were Nominated, Few Were Chosen

The biggest surprise at this year’s Oscars may have been the two-picture sweep.

By Zein Delgado
Staff Writer

The Academy, as it traditionally does, gave Best Picture to an "important" film with lots of social gravitas. But Alfonso Cauron's "Gravity" was the big story at Sunday night's 86th Annual Academy Awards, taking home seven Oscars, including Cauron's for Best Director.

Cauron became the first Hispanic filmmaker to win the award.

"Gravity," a visual spectacle about a space mission gone wrong and an astronaut's journey back to earth, not surprisingly took six technical awards, making good on seven of its 10 nominations.

Director Steve McQueen's "12 Years a Slave" won Best Picture, making him the first black director/producer to ever win an Oscar. "12 Years," the true story of a free black man kidnapped and sold into slavery in the antebellum South, is also the first black movie to win best picture.

Other "12 Years" winners included first-time nominee Lupita Nyong'o as Best Supporting Actress for her role as Patsy and John Ridley for his screenplay adaptation of Solomon Northup's 1867 biography.

The other five nominees for Best Picture, "American Hustle," "Captain Phillips," "Nebraska," "Philomena" and "The Wolf of Wall Street," went home empty-handed.

Matthew McConaughey was named

Best Actor for his portrayal of AIDS-diagnosed redneck Ron Woodroof and Jared Leto took Best Supporting Actor as AIDS-stricken transvestite Rayon in Jean-Marc Vallee's "Dallas Buyers Club."

Cate Blanchett won her second Best Actress award for her performance as a rich socialite who loses everything in writer/director Woody Allen's "Blue Jasmine." Blanchett has been nominated six times.

Spike Jonze won Best Original Screenplay for "Her."

Frozen's "Let It Go" received the Best Original Song award and was performed by Kristen Anderson-Lopez. Other performances for nominated songs included Pharrell Williams in a rousing audience participation version of Despicable Me 2's "Happy," Karen O performing Her's "The Moon Song" and U2 singing Mandela's "Ordinary Love."

Judy Garland offspring Liza Minnelli, Lorna Luft and Joseph Luft heard Pink do Garland's "Over the Rainbow" in a tribute to their mother.

Bette Midler performed "Wind Beneath My Wings" for the in memoriam section, a tribute to those industry figures who died in 2013. The list included critic Roger Ebert, "The Sopranos" James Gandolfini, director Harold Ramis, "Fast and Furious" star Paul Walker, child actress Shirley Temple and "Capote" star Philip Sey-

mour Hoffman.

Hosting the Awards for a second time was Ellen Degeneres, who kept things informal and light. Her antics included passing the hat among the star-studded audience for a pizza order, which arrived midway through the proceedings.

Degeneres' "selfie" with A-list actors Meryl Streep, Brad Pitt, Jennifer Lawrence, Julia Roberts, Bradley Cooper and more, was retweeted enough to take down Twitter for 20 minutes and made the front page of Reddit within minutes.

Best Supporting Actor Leto, in the first acceptance speech of the evening, got a bit political with a salute to the people in Ukraine and a tribute to the millions of people that lost their lives to AIDS.

"It doesn't escape me for one moment that so much joy in my life is thanks to so much pain in someone else's," said Best Supporting Actress Lupita Nyong'o in her acceptance speech. "For every little child, no matter where you're from, your dreams are valid."

And director McQueen had the last word.

"Everyone deserves not just to survive, but to live," McQueen said. "I dedicate this award to all the people who have endured slavery and the 21 million people who still suffer slavery today."

SPORTS



Photo by Lirio Alberto

TO THE HOLE: Senior Sal Gonzalez gets two the hard way during semis.

Poly Playoff Run Ends with 63-54 Sylmar Loss

By Joanna Rosales
Staff Writer

Sylmar jumped out to an early lead and held on to beat Poly 63-54 in a CIF City Section semi-final game at neutral Kennedy High on Monday, while Garfield squeaked by Granada Hills 49-47 in the other semi-final match.

Two days later, Poly lost a three-overtime thriller to Granada 91-80 in a play-in game for the state playoffs. Sylmar later trounced Garfield 88-54 to capture the CIF City Championship.

In the semi-final with the Parrots, senior Chance Cole led the Spartans with 18, 6'8" senior Devenir Duruisseau had 17 and senior Malcolm Wadlow added 10.

Poly senior Sal Gonzalez led all scorers with 26, junior Cesar Reyes had a quiet 15 and senior Mario Castaneda added eight for the Parrots. Junior Francisco Mariscal had three and junior Jose Esquada had two. No other Parrots scored. Both teams used only seven players each.

Poly finished the season 22-10 and 9-3 in league, finishing second behind Verdugo Hills' 12-0 record. Sylmar was 25-11 for the year and led the Valley Mission League with a 12-0 record.

CIF CITY SECTION
DIVISION II SEMI-FINAL

At Kennedy on Monday 3 March 2014

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Final
Poly	13	12	9	20	54
Sylmar	19	8	15	21	63

Play-in game for state playoffs (Granada lost to Garfield 49-47)

At Kennedy on Wednesday 5 March 2014

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	OT1	OT2	OT3	Final
Poly	12	13	11	21	5	10	8	80
G/H	16	10	20	11	5	10	19	91

Jacob Lilley had 28, including seven points in the third OT, to lead Granada Hills. Brandon Dozier had 24 and Michael Kalu had 20. Granada made seven free throws in the final OT. Parrot head coach Alan Woskanian was ejected in the final OT.

PRESEASON

Baseball Young but Solid

Junior Isaac Gutierrez and senior Jason Cisneros anchor Poly's pitching, while senior Octavio Marquez should bring a big bat.

By Zein Delgado
Staff Writer

The OPTIMIST asked veteran Parrot baseball coach Gabe Cerna about the upcoming season and Poly's prospects. Here's what he told us.

What is your outlook for the season?

As far as our league goes, we should do very well. Our team's a little young, but it's a good young.

We're not going to ten-run any team. Our game is defensive pitching, so our scores are going to be around 3-1, 5-2, 5-3, etc.

Last year we lost just nine games, but our schedule is a lot tougher this year, and I did that on purpose.

Senior outfielder David Reyes is our sparkplug. He sets the scheme up, gets on base, helps us score. He's our lead-off guy and he'll make some noise.

Senior Octavio Marquez is our three-hitter and junior Javier Vasquez bats cleanup.

Senior Yovani Rangel, outfielder and pitcher, came from Alemany and he's going to definitely contribute.

The anchor of our defense is senior shortstop Alonso Hernandez. And Vasquez was all-league last year.



Photo by Lirio Alberto

ON THE MOUND: Parrot senior Jason Cisneros is number two on coach Gabe Cerna's rotation.

We lost Salomon Salazar, our all-city catcher last year, but sophomore Omar Bugarin is pretty good.

We have three crucial games coming up against city opponents El Camino, Roosevelt and Marshall. We start doing games that count against us in power rankings and PI.

El Camino is always solid. Roosevelt will either win league or place second. And Marshall has won their league the last five or six years. We beat Roosevelt and Marshall last year. We didn't play El Camino.

The East Valley should be between us and Verdugo. Verdugo's number one

this year is Marco Quintanara, but we did pretty well against him last year.

So I feel pretty good about my team right now. April 15 is our Vegas tournament. That's a time where the team bonds and it's good for everybody. It's fun to get away and you start uniting and bonding as a team.

Coach Schwal is our pitching coach and he does a good job teaching the change up. He is a great advocate of the change-up and if you throw it correctly, it's a great pitch.

Junior pitcher Isaac Gutierrez is a returning varsity. He was a role-player last year, now he is a starter. He is probably our number one.

The other guys that fill in nicely are sophomore Jesus Carranza and senior Jason Cisneros, who no-hit Grant last year and Hart this year. He'll probably start some upcoming games. Isaac is probably one right now, Jason is my number two. Junior Juan Soto and Jesus battle for number three, but definitely our number one and two are Isaac and Jason.

I wish I could use Isaac every game, but with pitching, you have to give them rest. He pitched last Thursday, so he's going to pitch this Thursday, so probably once a week. Every time we roll him out there, we've got a chance to win.

Big hitters who are going to carry us and be consistent are senior outfielder Octavio Marquez and junior infielder Javier Vasquez.

VOLLEYBALL

Parrots Suffer Fourth Loss

Aghassy's volleyball boys off to rough start, but coach remains upbeat about young team.

By Joanna Rosales
Staff Writer

POLY'S VARSITY boys' volleyball team suffered its fourth straight loss last Thursday at Monroe 3-2, trading games until the Vikings captured the fifth, 15-10.

Previous losses came at the hands of Marshall 3-1 at home, Birmingham 3-0 on the road and Grant 3-1 at Poly.

"It's been the same theme all year," said Parrot head coach Sina Aghassy. "Playing inconsistently. We came out fired up 25-11. Played pretty dominantly. That has happened in every first game, Grant, Marshall and Birmingham."

"In the second game, we take our foot off the pedal a bit and we leave ourselves vulnerable. As the game goes on your opponent gets better and you have to match that intensity."

Serving and hitting errors were largely to blame.

"In the fifth game, every point really matters," said Aghassy. "When you miss three serves and commit eight hitting errors,

that's 11 points you just gave the other team."

Aghassy said mental lapses hurt his team's effort. "There would be one or two serving errors, and instead of letting that play go, we let that affect us as we went along," Aghassy said. "I think just being able to bounce back from errors is something that is going to test us this season."

Despite the rough start, Aghassy remains optimistic. "I've seen a lot of teams start out pretty slow," Aghassy said, "but it is not how you play in the beginning of the season, it's how you play heading in to playoffs."

With eight new varsity players, and two returners, the learning curve is steep.

"When you have that many new guys coming in," Aghassy said, "it's hard to find cohesion. But we are going to get better as we go along."

A young team can have a lot of positives, Aghassy believes. "There is still a lot of potential going forward," Aghassy said. "We just need to stay positive and keep our head straight as we move through the season."

PRESEASON

Peralta Expects Experience to Pay Dividends This Year



Photo by Lirio Alberto

X's and O's: Veteran Parrot head coach Manny Peralta has the team to win it all as long as the bats come through.

By Christine Maralit
Staff Writer

The OPTIMIST asked veteran softball coach Manny Peralta about his expectations for the upcoming season. Here's what he told us.

This is the team I've been waiting for. We have 12 of last year's players returning. Of the nine starters from last year's team, seven are starters this year. We have eight seniors out of 14 girls.

It looks like seniorAngie (Angelique Ramos), my senior, will be the #1 starter now. She was third pitcher last year and sat on the bench a lot. I think that fueled her to want to start her senior year. She's done extremely well during the off season. She got physically stronger and I hope mentally she can handle being the #1 pitcher

this year.

Our hitting is questionable. We've had a successful off season, but it's still a concern. In the past, we have not been able to produce a lot of runs against the best teams. So the emphasis this year has been on hitting. We probably spent twice as much time practicing our hitting as anything else during the off season.

As for top players, I can put anyone in the lineup and feel comfortable. I couldn't even put down the top three because eight players right now can be interchangeable.

I have to go with our pitcher Angie. She's gonna get the job done. She's one of the best players. Probably junior Alondra Rodriguez. She performed well last year and I'm hoping she'll do the same this year.

Defensively, senior Erica Tzics is probably the strongest catcher I have. She'll be a four-year varsity starter this year. So she definitely is going

to be someone to look out for defensively. We have a lot of key players that look like they're going to contribute this year.

The biggest thing we have worked on this year is team chemistry. We went back and looked at our team last year. We might've felt it wasn't the best so we really want our girls to know each other. Obviously you don't have to like the person but you have to respect them. And I think this year's team is starting to work together. They like to hang out together. As much time as we spend together, we'd want to like to be around each other. I think that's something we've been improving on.

I'm never satisfied. Even when we have a good win, I still think about what we didn't do well. So I think we're always trying to improve and get better every day but I think team chemistry has been big.