

The Poly Optimist

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School

VOL. XCXVIII, No. 23

SERVING THE POLY COMMUNITY SINCE 1913

FEBRUARY 2016

Chef Higgins Receives Top Award

Christmas comes early for Chef Higgins

By Melanie Solis
Staff Writer

Poly's own Chef Bob Higgins was awarded the *Chef of the Year Award* by the American Culinary Federation and the Cuisine of Southern California at the L.A. Hotel Downtown. The Cuisine of Southern California includes various hotels, restaurants and culinary schools.

Nominations took place in August and September and this award was presented in the middle of December making this Chef Higgin's early Christmas present. Three other people were nominated but Chef Higgins couldn't believe that they called his name in the annual Chef's Ball. He was nominated because the organization believes that Poly High School goes above and beyond with volunteer work for the community. Chef Higgins was honored to be nominated by the President and said "all the chefs had to vote on me and they told me it was almost a landslide to win, so it was quite an honor."

Two years ago, Higgins' students were competing against Chef Rossi's student chefs and were given a mystery basket to prepare a four course meal for four people, in four hours. The college students thought it



Chef Higgins with trophy

Photo Provided By Chef Higgins

was funny and thought it was a joke having to compete against Poly's student chefs, but Poly won first place in that competition.

Higgins does volunteer work with his students which includes feeding over 5,000 veterans this past Christmas at the Veterans Administration in Wilshire. Twenty-four student chefs participated in this and the American Culinary Federation donated all the food.

The next upcoming event for the Cooking Club will be in Las Vegas in March. It's sanctioned by the American Culinary Federation. The competition

involves a mystery basket of food, and students have to prepare a three course meal for four people, in four hours and Higgins says that "It's like an Iron Man competition."

Chef Higgins has been cooking for as long as he can remember and was inspired by his wife who is also a Chef Instructor who works at LA Mission College. Other schools that Higgins has worked at include Granada Hills and Northridge Academy High School. He prefers teaching and working with Poly students and Poly's campus.

Higgins started as a

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Poly Student Celebrates Thanksgiving by Giving

Student gives to poor in El Salvador

By Damaris Gallardo
Guest Writer

Poly student Danessa Lemus spent Thanksgiving in her mother's native country of El Salvador, from November 27th to December 9th, in her role as a Beauty Pageant contestant. The Pageant was created to raise money to give to the impoverished children and families in El Salvador and Central American countries. The pageant was only for Salvadorians, and includes various pageants for little girls, teens and adults.

Initially Lemus thought this pageant was about beauty, and "who's the prettier or smarter" but after entering discovered it was about raising money by selling tickets for 50 cents apiece, which was later part of a larger donation to the poor in these countries. Over two months, Lemus sold votes

in Salvadorian restaurants in the Los Angeles area, soliciting donations from random people, and asking for additional support from family and friends, raising \$2,300.00, the most money and the highest number of votes.

The goal of Lemus mother was to return to El Salvador and give back to the poor in her native village and community. The first city the pageant contestants visited was Chalatenango. Lemus said it is "still very dangerous to go to these parts of El Salvador and that there are no rules to restrain the gangs or criminal activity, and protect the public at large."

Lemus colored her blonde hair brown before leaving in order to help ensure her personal safety. Local news reports indicate that ladies

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Lemus with Salvadorian children

Photo Provided by Danessa Lemus

No Cruising, No Tricks, No Skateboards Allowed Anymore

By Diana Garcia
Staff Writer

It's a New Year and a new Skateboard policy contract at Poly High School. Due to safety issues, a new skateboard policy has been established and will

be enforced by all deans, coordinators, and administrators from all grade levels starting this semester. Rules of enforcement will be included in daily morning announcements, the Parent Newsletter in English and in

Spanish and copies of this policy will be provided to all faculty and staff.

Safety concerns have continued to be raised by faculty and staff, and use of skateboards has already resulted in injuries. Art

teacher Wood Grigsby said he has been injured twice on campus when students have collided with him resulting in serious injury to him. Grigsby said "these skateboarders simply are not paying attention to their sur-

roundings."

Espinoza states enforcing this policy is important not "just for faculty, but for students and staff as well." She states this policy will be enforced at all times at Poly, including after school hours.

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Let Your Voice be Heard!

Visit *The Poly Optimist's* blog, Parrot Squwak, and write your thoughts and comments

Polyoptimist.edublogs.org



Check out page 5 for Europe trip tales

Check out page 6 for a journey to Cuba

OPINION

EDITORIALS

Printing Press Problems

By Sergio Rodriguez
Guest Writer

News Flash: H.F. "Gerry" Lenfest, owner of the Philadelphia Media Network has decided to donate the companies Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia Daily News and Philly.com website to a newly formed tax free institute. What does this mean for newspaper companies in the U.S and possibly the world? Stay tuned for what's next.

In an article from TIME Magazine in 2009 The Philadelphia Daily News was in the top ten of endangered newspapers. Unfortunately it is the same for Poly's Optimist. We have lost almost all our staff writers and after going to press you might find a newspaper thrown on the ground or even find a stack of last month's edition still sitting in the SLC Center. It seems

like the way of living for many people is starting to come to an end. People don't read newspapers anymore they prefer to get their news from online sources like *The Washington Post* or *The Los Angeles Times*.

According to a study conducted by Pew Research Center "The decline in weekday circulation fell almost equally across all categories. This includes top tier newspapers (those with average weekday circulation of 500,000 or more) whose weekday circulation fell 4% in 2014 after seeing a 22% spike from 2012 to 2013."

We live in the digital age and should expect to see a decline in printed newspapers slowly rising. On the other hand, it's a great way to reduce the amount of trees cut as well as trash in the streets. But because of this, problems can still

arise. What about the people who don't know how to browse the web or even worse can't access the internet for some reason? What will happen to the people who rely on the newspaper to get their news?

If there are no more newspapers being printed then that mean that some people will also be out of jobs because they worked in the printing department. The companies see it as either they lose employees or they go out of business so they prefer to let people go in order to earn a little more time for the company. The only advantage in a digital newspaper is the quantity of material that can now be displayed for everyone to see. You can now browse a newspaper with one finger and without having to take a stack of papers only so you can throw it away once you're done reading.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Julio Dimas

Thank you for bringing great articles about the Unified Sports.

Stories like that bring awareness and education to all about what we do as program, school and community. Thank you for sharing our stories.



ALUMNI CORNER

Preparing for Critical Thinking

By Joshua Penado
Guest Writer

Do you feel like your high school prepared you for college? How did your high school succeed or fail in preparing you for college? These are the first questions my English professor asked the class on the first day of the semester. Although there are only two choices, yes or no, there could be thousands of reasons behind those two simple words. I like to think that my answer had a certain uniqueness behind it.

Before I get to ahead of myself I need to reintroduce myself to the Poly readers. My name is Joshua Penado,

long-time member and former editor-in-chief of the Poly Optimist and now a student at California State University Northridge (CSUN).

My response to my professor's question was yes, I felt like I was prepared but not in the way that my high school intended. Funny thing is that the idea of "critical thinking" sticks even in college. Critical thinking was heavily emphasized by my professor who was in turn shocked to hear that most students thought that their calculus or physics classes taught them to think critically. I instead accredited my time in the Poly Optimist to teaching me how to think critically.

I truly believe that the Poly Optimist helped me develop the required skills needed to succeed in a college environment. To succeed in the Optimist I had to know how to single out bias, credibility, and the simple matter of fact or opinion. Not to mention having to take into account what isn't said just as much as what is.

I don't mean to undermine the importance of math or science, I just wish to stress the importance of writing. One of my English professor's favorite phrases was "Cells and numbers don't reveal the meaning behind the word."

I remember walking into my first college course, Politi-

cal Institutions, and getting that oh so familiar "new kid" feeling. I wasn't the only one either. Everyone had a sort of unspoken rule, don't make eye contact. It must be pretty funny for professors to walk in on the first day to a room full of living statues. Eventually though the ice breaks and everyone starts to actually talk to each other without awkward laughs and twitchy smiles. But I think that's part of the fun, getting to know new people. Take it from me, college will introduce you to all kinds of different people.

I've had a lot of adjusting to do within my short time at college so far. I've had to learn how to live indepen-

dently in my own apartment. I've had to learn how to avoid the flood of morning and afternoon traffic to and from school. And I've also had to develop my own time management skills, which was surprisingly a lot harder without my parents.

College is a stepping stone and a milestone stone for progress. Now I don't mean to be cheesier than a cheese pizza but I can honestly say that attending CSUN has changed my life. I've learned to appreciate the little things in life a lot more, now that they seem few and far between. College can be a humbling experience but not one without perks.



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 room.14 or Ms.Matlen's box.

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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.

The Optimist Needs

- Sports Writers
- Staff Writers



Optimist Blog
Polyoptimist.edublogs.org

CAMPUS

[From Skate front]

Skateboard lockers are available for use at the front of the school, but students will have to provide their own locks. Teachers are discouraged from storing skateboards in their classrooms for students.

Teachers will be asked to send the student with his/her skateboard to the respective Dean's office so the board can be stored in their office for the day.

The administration is in the process of purchasing locks for students to use during school hours.

Students will be provided with a lock to borrow if it is his/her first time violating the policy. In addition, students will be given a copy of the policy.

The 2nd offense, the board will be confiscated and not returned until the following day and the parent/or guardian will be contacted.

The 3rd offense the board will be again confiscated, but this time the parent will have to meet with the Dean's office to have it returned. The student will not be allowed to bring the skateboard on school property and the student will receive permanent documentation on their school record of "willful defiance." In addition, 11th/12th grade Dean and Assistant Principal of Special Education, Avilene Espinoza and Artin Arhanian want to let students know that they will be given detention after school for defiance. 10th grade Dean, Hardip Singh, says "students have been cooperative so far."

Photo by Michael Manzano

Skateboards parked at the skateboard corner.



Poly High Skateboard Policy January 2016

Por favor lea la información siguiente cuidadosamente ya que las reglas están en efecto:

- Los estudiantes NO estarán permitidos usar sus patinetas (dispositivos de ruedas) en el plantel escolar.
- Si las patinetas (dispositivos de ruedas) son vistos por el personal en el plantel escolar, serán confiscadas.
- Si un estudiante tiene una patineta (dispositivo de ruedas) en su posesión por primera vez, ya sea cargando, poniendo en el suelo, o montando en el plantel escolar, la patineta (dispositivo de ruedas) será confiscada, una copia del contrato se proporcionará al estudiante y la patineta (dispositivo de ruedas) se devolverá al estudiante el mismo día después de la escuela.
- Si el estudiante tiene una patineta (dispositivo de ruedas) en su posesión por segunda vez, ya sea cargando, poniendo en el suelo, o montando en el plantel escolar, la patineta (dispositivo de ruedas) será confiscada, se les llamará a los padres para informarles y la patineta (dispositivo de ruedas) NO se devolverá al estudiante hasta el siguiente día después de la escuela.
- Si el estudiante tiene una patineta (dispositivo de ruedas) en su poder por tercera vez, la patineta (dispositivo de ruedas) será confiscada, se hará una llamada telefónica, y una conferencia con los padres será requerida para poder devolver la patineta o el dispositivo con ruedas al estudiante.
- La escuela o el Distrito Escolar NO será responsable por la pérdida o robo de las patinetas (dispositivos de ruedas) dentro del plantel escolar si el estudiante no sigue las reglas de esta póliza.
- Este contrato no prohíbe los dispositivos de ruedas para los estudiantes con discapacidades físicas y / o de salud.

Please read the following information carefully as these guidelines are now in effect:

- Students are NOT permitted to use skateboards (wheeled devices) on campus.
- If skateboards (wheeled devices) are seen by staff on campus, they will be confiscated.
- If a student has a skateboard (wheeled device) in his/her possession for the first time, whether the student is carrying it, putting it on the floor, or riding it on campus, the skateboard (wheeled device) will be confiscated, a copy of the contract will be provided to the student, and the skateboard (wheeled device) will be returned to the student the same day after school.
- If a student has a skateboard in his/her possession for the second time, whether the student is carrying it, putting it on the floor, or riding it on campus, it will be confiscated, a parent phone call will be made, and the skateboard (wheeled device) WILL NOT be returned until after school the following school day.
- If a student has a skateboard (wheeled device) in his/her possession for the third time, the skateboard (wheeled device) will be confiscated, a phone call will be made, and a parent conference will be required in order to return the wheeled device to student.
- The school and the school district are NOT responsible for students' lost or stolen skateboards (wheeled devices) unless confiscated by school staff member.
- This contract does not prohibit wheeled devices for students with physical and/or health disabilities.

[Giving from Front page]

with "blonde hair are the wives of gangsters."

Lemus says her outreach to

the Special Ed kids who are in the Special Olympics was really special, and these kids and their caregivers made

her feel welcomed and appreciated.

The trip included many charity events, including

going to different cities, including San Salvador, el Salvador, San Rafael, Chalatenango and Sonsante and

working with children and families, including supporting the elderly at retirement homes.

When Lemus returned this year, she "took a guitar to a retirement home that a lady had asked for, and later this senior started playing the guitar, looking very happy."

Lemus has started her own Foundation for the elderly called "Fundación Danessa in Metalio, which is her mother's hometown. People can donate at Miss Independencia or Edith Merino on

Facebook.

Lemus also collects toys, clothing, and household items which they send throughout the year to their charity in El Salvador.

"The poverty and need is great" says Lemus. Delivering baskets to families and kids in need and such terrible poverty helped Lemus realize "how great the need is in El Salvador just to provide basic needs for these people."

If possible, Lemus plans to return next Thanksgiving and continue giving. She says, her mother is her biggest supporter and her inspiration, challenging her to do something different with her life.

Lemus plans to attend college to be a registered nurse and provide medical support to those in need around the world, particularly in Central America.



Lemus reaches out to kids

Photo Provided by Danessa Lemus

CAMPUS

Happiness is Healthy

Counselors open to conversations

By Zovig Boyajia
Guest Writer

So the holidays are over, you have a new schedule & on top of EVERYTHING El Nino is bringing us more cloudy days than usual. Did you know that our feelings are affected by the weather? It sounds crazy but it is true...especially for us here in California where we are used to the sun shining pretty much every day. Thankfully there are some little things we can all do to beat the winter blues.

First, make sure you are eating & sleeping well (oh yes, our bodies are connected to our brains so if one isn't getting what it needs, neither is the other). Another trick is trying to do activities outside to catch as much sun as possible (even better if the activity is active like walking, running or playing a sport). Participating in a pleasant event is also very helpful to help with our overall ability to regulate our emotions.

What's a pleasant event?



Ms. Zovig, PSW

Photo By Michael Manzano

Well it is different for everyone. Granted we'd all like to be able to go to Magic Mountain everyday but that's not always possible. Try identifying little things like watching your favorite movie, talking to friends, doing your favorite hobby or reading. Set aside time every day to engage in your pleasant event.

If you notice that you cannot shake the blues there are people here at Poly to help you! If you notice that you are hav-

ing trouble coming to school you can contact Mrs. Mungia in the health office or if you just need someone to talk to you are always welcome to come see me, Ms. Zovig, your Psychiatric Social Worker in the counseling office. Also remember that your academic counselors are always there to help as well. Sometimes the hardest part is asking for help, but just remember that all we adults are here to help you succeed!

[From Chef Front]

dishwasher and "started from the bottom and worked, way up." He never thought he would become a chef and especially win an award for his culinary talents. Among his many awards included a competition for a special "plate" where he was given a mystery basket and had to prepare a four course meal. He used to have this plate in his classroom but once caught someone eating from it and decided to display it in his home rather than his classroom.

He specializes in Italian food and used to own three restaurants, but sold them because he got tired of the business and decided to

take a break and do something he really likes, such as traveling.

Chef Higgins sees cooking both as a hobby and a career and delighted many of his students, who want to major in culinary arts. Members of his cooking club have taught him patience. He said "You need to take your time and let people fail and if I jump in and correct everything they do wrong, they're not going to learn and that's one of the hardest things, even with my class, is to stand back and you see they're going to fail, and let them fail, so they can learn from their mistakes."



Photo By Michael Manzano

T.V to Youtube Changes Viewing Options

Like, Comment, and Subscribe

By Melanie Solis
Staff Writer

Youtubers are taking over the internet. Youtube is one of the biggest broadcasting sites out there. Many people upload their videos from simple vlogs, tutorials, compilations, and gaming videos. Those who actually upload these videos, as a job are called "Youtubers."

Many youtubers started out when Youtube was just a small broadcasting website and gained subscribers steadily. Many started making their own books, products, movies, documentaries, and even clothing lines.

Youtuber movies that came out last year in 2015 were, *Hit the Road* starring Joe Sugg from Thatcherjoe and Caspar Lee from Caspar, *Snervous* a docu-

mentary starring Tyler Oakley, *The Outfield* starring Nash Grier from Vine, Cameron Dallas from Vine, and Joey Bragg from Disney Channel, *Smosh the movie* starring Anthony Padilla and Ian Hecox both from Smosh and finally *Bad Night* starring Jenn Mcalister from Jennxpenn.

Youtuber novels were a big hit last year. To name a few, Shane Dawson from Shane Dawson TV published his first book/memoir called *I Hate Myselfie* and he is currently in the works of publishing his next book called *It gets Worse*. Zoe Sugg from Zoella, published her book *The Girl Online #1* and recently published another

book called *Girl Online on Tour #2*. Connor Franta from Connor Franta published a book/memoir

called *A Work in Progress* and Joe Sugg published a comic book called *Username: Evie*.

Many famous youtubers such as Jenna Marbles, Tyler Oakley, Kandee Johnson, The Slow Mo guys, and Lilly Singh from IISuperwomanII are also making guest appearances on SNL and the James Corden Show. Grace Helbig, has gotten her own tv show on E! called the Grace Helbig Show where she interviews celebrities and also plays games with them.

The most subscribed youtuber is Felix Kjellberg, a.k.a Pewdiepie, a Swedish youtuber. He has over 41,000,000 subscribers, with over 10 billion views. His videos

all consist of him playing video games and posts to his channel every day.

Early Youtubers, such as Joey Graceffa, Connor Franta, Ingrid Nilsen, Shane Dawson, Gigi Gorgeous, Tyler Oakley, and many more were among many who suffered bullying and learning disabilities, and struggled with sexual identities. The Youtube platform provided a safe place to be creative, productive, and gain confidence and acceptance by others.

Today the youtube site receives an average of 500,000 views to over 1 million per day per channel and has about 4 billion views per day and about 300 hours of youtube videos are posted every minute.



Felix Kjellberg aka Pewdiepie on the cover of *Variety*
Photo provided by Google Images

TRAVEL

Enchanting Experience in Europe

Students spend holidays in Paris

By Diana Garcia
Staff Writer

Thirty-two Poly students celebrated New Years 2016 in Paris, in the shadow of the *Arch De Triomphe*. Students enjoyed an opportunity of a lifetime with a trip to Europe during the holidays arranged by English teacher, Wendy Elam.

The trip started in London, England. Their tour included *The British Museum* where students saw artifacts from around the world. At *Buckingham Palace*, they were able to see the "Changing of the Guards." Students also enjoyed a formal English tea at Covent Gardens. At the end of the day, students were allowed to explore the city in groups joined by a chaperone and were expected back at the hotel at their curfew.

Considering the recent terrorist attacks in Paris, Freddy Nunez and Jeffrey Alcantara said they did not feel nervous, but quite safe due to the amount of security at each city, provided by the respective governments. Nunez and Alcantara said that they felt confident the police were taking necessary precautions and would not let another attack happen.

Students visited *The Louvre* in Paris where they saw the painting of the "Mona Lisa" from behind of a crowd of speculators. Nunez was "underwhelmed"

by the painting because of the crowd and the difficulty to get a better view. Alcantara was more fascinated by a Roman sculpture because of its distinct design. Nunez was also more fascinated by the Roman artwork because of its intricate detail. The museum was once a palace for French royalty. Students took a boat ride on the River Seine where Nunez said he was captivated by how big the museum actually is.

Even though the group was large, they had their own schedule, bus, and tour director. "That's why I think it was so relaxed," said Nunez. Despite the fact that there was a language barrier in Paris and Italy, Nunez said that knowing Spanish made it easier to get around Italy.

The tour group took an eight hour train ride to Rome where they visited the Vatican City where Pope Francis opened the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica. This opening was not expected until the year 2025, but students were fortunate enough to have been able to visit the Basilica. The tour of Rome also included the Colosseum and the Trevi Fountain.

Pompeii was the last stop of the trip and the weather put a damper on the tour but nevertheless, the students continued. The hard down pour of rain made viewing the ruins of this ancient

city very difficult.

Although the students were on a tight schedule, Nunez and Alcantara said the free time they were given was their favorite part of each stop, because it allowed them to explore the cities on their own and try the "exotic" foods of the foreign countries. "I ate a snail or escargot in French," said Nunez. Nunez said traveling in Europe opened his mind to try new things and allowed him to step out of his comfort zone.

Being in Europe, "made the valley seem small," said Alcantara. He emphasizes that the trip is "eye-opening" and "life changing". For him it is important to travel because there is more to the world than a person's surroundings.

"Going to Europe usually isn't something you get to do often so when you have the opportunity, I feel like you have to seize it, because you don't know if you will get the opportunity again," said Nunez. Not only did Nunez learn the history of the cities he visited, but also realized that he likes to travel.

Nunez said his favorite memory of Europe is spending



Photos Provided by Jeffrey Alcantara

New Year's Eve in Paris because of the sense of camaraderie. Alcantara said his favorite memory would be "sitting in a cafe in Paris, drinking coffee, and watching the city go by." Alcantara's least favorite part of the trip was being sick in the rainy weather of Pompeii.

Alcantara advises students that, "If you have the chance to go to Europe, take it even if it might

be expensive because it might be worth it." He explains that one doesn't realize they are in a different part of the world until they are there experiencing it.

Alcantara explains that the hotels were very luxurious with nice views and the rooming situation was not crowded. The trip cost \$3,000.00, not including lunch and spending money.

Traveling Empowers Students

Places to go, people to see, cultures to learn



By Kate Martinez
Staff Writers

This December 2016 will be Poly student's last chance for several years to travel to Europe with English teacher Wendy Elam.

The cost of the trip at this time is estimated to be \$3100 (until March 1st it will be \$3200 thereafter). Students are able to make a monthly payment which brings the cost within reach for more families. Payment covers everything except lunch and souvenirs. Students are allowed to choose their roommates in the hotels and there will be opportunities in London and Paris to go in small groups for half a day to explore, shop, visit museums, or even amusement parks.

"Traveling to Europe at this age is an extremely powerful life changing event," said Elam. Students will learn to interact with new cultures and different people; along the way even learn about themselves.

They are tasked with figuring out a new monetary system, the Euro and the British Pound, new languages, respecting other cultural values and learning how to move in the world. "These lessons they learn about life cannot

be learned any other way," said Elam.

After this trip, students can have conversation, with people they never knew they could have, "it puts them in a very refined sophisticated club of world travelers," said Elam.

Traveling brings a level of self-confidence and self-esteem that Elam said she has seen change people's path especially with their major or university choice.

For most trips, the students' first choice is to travel to London and Paris, the third location varies year to year, but the students have full control of travel plans by attending the monthly mandatory meetings in room 16 with Elam. "The meetings are designed to decide what we are going to do in our free time as well as educate the students about what they should pack, the customs in the cities and exchange rates," said Elam. The meetings are important for it allows students and Elam to plan out the group's time wisely and get acquainted with the people who will be travelling together.

Official start of the tour is usually the day after traveling from Los Angeles. Once in London students may settle in to their des-

tinuation hotel or go on a bus tour which takes them to all the major sights around London including *Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, Big Ben, and The London Eye*. The tour group will have the chance to visit the *British Museum* or *National Portrait Gallery*.

In each city, there is usually a walking tour of a particular area of interest and, on a separate day, a bus tour of the major sights.

Every day, students in small groups, will have lunch time all to themselves to explore the City. They can "discover different kinds of food and streets" on their own.

Next they will travel to Paris, where they will be spending New Year's Eve under the light of the Eiffel Tower. The group will go to *The Louvre*, to see the "most famous lady in the world, Mona Lisa," said Elam. The tour will cover Paris's major sights such as the *Sacr e-Coeur* in the Montmartre, and the Notre Dame.

For 2016's trip to Europe they will be visiting Amsterdam as their third location. So far they have planned to take a canal tour, and then visit the Anne Frank House.

TRAVEL

Morillo's Milestone in Cuba

History teacher revisits history in the making

By Kate Martinez
Staff Writer

Magnet AP History teacher Juan Morillo travelled back to Havana, Cuba over the break shortly after the historic reopening of the American Embassy, to attend the 31st year of the Havana Jazz Festival, as the legal representative and producer of flutist, saxophonist and UCLA Professor, Justo Almario.

Morillo also went to see the American flag raised at the Embassy, "It was historic. It hasn't happened 54 years," said Morillo.

Morillo is a licensed researcher of Cuban culture, music, and history allowing him to travel to Cuba, through a permit from The American Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). His focus in research is on Afro-Cuban culture and music because "it's the foundation of American music," said Morillo.

Customs and entry into Cuba remains very strict, and according to Morillo has still not changed from last year's visit, but Morillo noticed more Americans traveling to Cuba. "I think there is a lot of curiosity," said Morillo.

Most tourists are able to visit Cuba with a US State Department authorized tour called "People-to-People travel." The travel agency

website of insightCuba assures visitors will have "unique access to people and places the average tourist rarely sees."

Morillo believes the US State Department is granting permits to American tourists to travel to the communist ruled country, with a democratic propaganda in mind. Morillo said, "I think most Cubans want some of the [amenities] we have, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, they want to watch Direct TV but they also probably don't want to give up some things like free education and health care."

Morillo is convinced that it's possible to give the people of Cuba what they want, without needing to completely eradicate the benefits from their socialist past.

"People to People" allows tourists to attend activities like the Jazz Festival. The week prior to the Jazz Festival, Havana hosted the International Festival of the New Latin American Cinema which promotes and awards works that enrich the artistic value of the Latin American and Caribbean cultural identity.

Morillo has been interested in music all his life, in particular music of African



Morillo attends international jazz festival

Photos Provided By Juan Morillo

American origin. His fascination for jazz originates from his idol, American jazz trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, who he had the fortune to work with on tours and concerts as a student at UCLA. "He's a legend. Coincidentally he was also fascinated by Afro-Cuban music," said Morillo.

His involvement with the music industry dates back to the late 90's when he began producing concerts and records for the Center for the Arts of Performance at

UCLA as a student. "That attracted me to the entire business of music and performances," said Morillo.

"In the old days when the record industry was bountiful, I used to sell my productions to labels, but the business has changed a lot," said Morillo.

Throughout his travels, Morillo has connected with many people, not just artists and musicians but officials in the Ministry of Culture, Institutes of music, and Professors at universities.

Unfortunately, last year's hopeful atmosphere in Cuba after Obama normalized relations between both countries did not stay; instead it was replaced with uncertainty. "A year has passed and nothing has changed," said Morillo, "Change always takes time. People expect things to happen right away but it's going to take a transitional period."

Morillo shares his love for travel with students by accompanying them to Europe. Now he is considering taking them to Cuba as well, but has decided to wait until the relationship is "clear" between the two governments.

Morillo thinks Cuba offers the perfect society to study comparative politics. Cuba society would give the students "besides the politics, living glimpses to the past that we had in United States."

Students interested in marine or biological science would also have the chance to take in the nature of Cuba, "one of the most beautiful countries in the world," said Morillo. Cuba nurtures beaches untouched by humans and wildlife that have lived there for centuries.

"It'll be exciting because it's a completely different society, with elements still standing since the 1950's," said Morillo.

Cuba offers interests for people in all walks of life, who share a desire to learn about another culture and country that's been off-limits for many years to Americans.

Morillo highlighted the cultural and musical aspects of his trip, discovering the young people engaged at high level musicianship with multiple instruments is "always overwhelming" to him.



Morillo in front of American Embassy

ENTERTAINMENT

Academy Nominated

SPOTLIGHT

BREAK THE STORY. BREAK THE SILENCE.



Recommended viewing from the Optimist Staff

Emerging from Sundance 2016

Films to look forward to!

- “Little Men” - Directed & written by Ian Sachs
- “The Birth of a Nation” - Directed & written by Nate Parker
- “Manchester by the Sea” - Directed & written by Kenneth Lonergan
- “Weiner” - Directed by Josh Kriegman and Elyse Steinberg
- “Kiki” - Directed by Sara Jordeno
- “Southside With You” - Written and directed by Richard Tanne

See the full list and read about the films at *The Huffington Post*

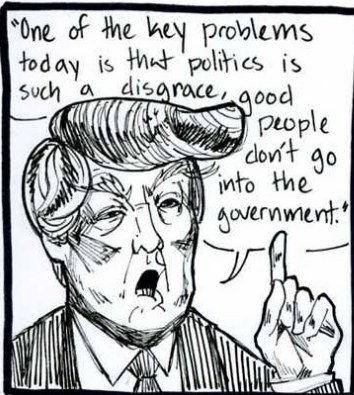


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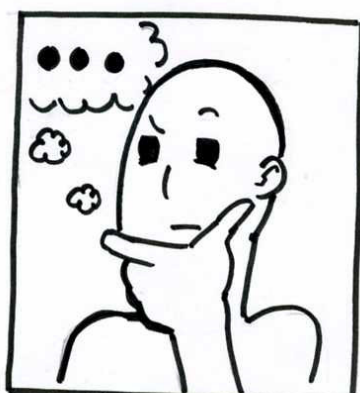
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COMICS

IRONY



COMMAS



Ashley Marshall

SPORTS

Parrots advance to third place in league with a sweeping win



By Kate Martinez
Staff Writer

Poly Parrots won 3-1 against the Arleta Mustangs making them tied for third place in the East Valley Soccer League. After scoring two goals, victory was guaranteed for the Parrots.

Varsity soccer coach Adolfo Acosta, highlighted the game changing players defender Nico Espiniza, Midfielder Chris Trujillo, and forwards Jesus Alvarez.

“We had a lot of fast breaks and pressure in mid-field,” said Acosta, “that’s what consolidated our victory.”

Photo by Michael Manzano

Parrots jump up to third place with score of 6-3

Poly Parrots Basketball team won 55-46 in a home conference game against Arleta Mustangs



Photos by Melanie Solis

Poly cheer performs at Basketball game



Boys Wrestling wins division II of LA city Sections



Photo provided by Fabian Anguiano

Wrestlers' plaque sits at main office