

The Poly Optimist

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School

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FIRST PERSON

A Quest for QuestBridge

By Denise Acosta
Staff Writer

Four Poly finalists stand to receive full-ride scholarships to prestigious universities through the QuestBridge National College Match Program. One finalist, Denise Acosta, wrote about her experience with the program in the story below.

In life, you have to be aware of all your options. This becomes particularly important when applying to colleges and receiving financial aid.

As a child of two parents who only completed the sixth grade, I can say that I never really had a support system for my education. Everything I knew about college came from my teachers, counselors, and friends.

So when my college counselor mentioned the QuestBridge National College Match program, I felt college was more accessible than ever. As a non-profit organization, QuestBridge searches for outstanding students who have overcome economic challenges. QuestBridge was willing to pay for four years of a college education at one of its prestigious partner colleges that included Yale University, Columbia University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Princeton University, and the University of Chicago among many others. All I had to do was apply.

My parents were always telling me that they could not afford to send me to a good college because those were expensive and we were barely getting by as it was. They encouraged me to go local, and if possible, attend community college, the cheapest.

When I explained QuestBridge to them, they were skeptical.

All through high school, I have earned good grades and been involved in a plethora of extra curricular activities. I knew that I needed to go to a college where I could expand on what I had already accomplished and realize my potential. I sincerely believed my educational career was far from over.

I conducted online research about

[See Quest, pg 6]

CORRECTION:

"Parrots RIFd" in the November issue said staff would be reduced by 16,000. The number should have been 1600. The OPTIMIST regrets the error.

PALI STUFFS POLY - TWICE

Football squad loses to visiting Dolphins 50-40 in quarterfinals and volleyball girls lose 3-0 to the same school in CIF championship game at Roybal.



Photo by Bill Coleman

PLAYOFFS: Poly senior running back Edgar Alejandro (above) and Yvette Corral and Nereyda Marquez (below) in losing efforts against Palisades.



Photo by Jennifer Martinez

By Kelsey Cruz
Sports Editor

Palisades picked on Poly's football and girls' volleyball teams in the playoffs instead of turkey during the Thanksgiving break.

The Lady Parrots looked flat and out of sync, losing three straight to the playoff-veteran Dolphins in the CIF Championship game at Roybal Learning Center Saturday. The following Friday, Poly's varsity football squad yielded a season-high 50 points to visiting Palisades in the City Section Division II quarterfinals.

Poly seniors varsity standouts Kevin Ervin and Edgar Alejandro were the only Parrot scorers and had all but 21 of the Parrots 517 total yards. Ervin accounted for 336 yards and four touchdowns on 31 carries, while Alejandro had 138 yards on 22 carries, 110 in the first half, and the remaining two Parrot scores.

Poly (9-3) got as close as 23-20 in the second quarter but was down

36-20 at the half. The Parrots made another push late in the game, but Pali stopped the Parrots' two-point conversion attempts and pulled away midway through the fourth.

Pali senior running back Malcolm Creer had an efficient night, with three touchdowns and 162 yards rushing on eight carries. Dolphin senior offensive linebacker Hakeem Jawanza rushed for 145 yards on six carries and scored a TD. Three other Dolphins added TDs

For the game, Pali had 410 yards rushing on 28 carries, 24 passing yards and six scorers.

Palisades' football team has had a remarkable turnaround this season under first-year coach Perry Jones.

Three weeks ago, the Dolphins won their first postseason game since 1999, overcoming a 21-6 halftime deficit to roll over Lincoln 43-28 in the opening round of the City Section playoffs.

Jones and his father Pat, the offensive coordinator, installed a wishbone offense and turned around a program that had gone 26-65 over the previous nine seasons, including 1-9 last fall.

The seventh-seeded Dolphins (7-5) Palisades beat Granada 10-0 during the regular season and held Granada's star running back to 52 yards while Poly got thumped by the

[See Poly, pg 6]

Poly Grad Back in Iraq

Parrot grad Summer Malalla is back in Iraq and looking to get out.

By Joel Hinojosa
Editor in Chief

The following interview with Summer Malalla, a Poly graduate, was conducted via email. Malalla returned to Iraq after graduating from Poly but is now trying to come back to the United States.

Q. Tell us about your early life in Iraq.

I was born in Baghdad. My childhood was very normal. I've lived in a good environment, safely with my family. Everything was normal. I go to school, go back home, study and go to school the next day. We go out to visit relatives and friends and sometimes we go on trips.

Q. Do Sunnis and Shiites disagree and how has that affected you and your family?

Basically Islam has two sects, the Sunni and the Shiite, and we don't disagree among each other. But after the war, the government became corrupt and each party in the government had its own militia. They started killing people, Muslims, Christians, everyone. They wanted Iraq to be in a mess and that's what they accomplished.

We, the people of Iraq, don't hate anyone who is Iraqi and we love everyone regardless of their religion. Young men are being killed every day and that frightens us. We could lose my father and two brothers or even get killed by an explosion that could happen in the street or near our house, so we decided to leave the country.

Q. Tell us about your parents.

My mother is a housewife and my dad used to be a math teacher for over 32 years. He has a master degree in math from the University of Detroit. After the war he started working as a translator through which he was able to obtain Special Immigration Visas (SIV) for himself, my mother, my little brother and me. Unfortunately, my older sister and brother couldn't get an SIV because they were over 20 years old. They had to leave for Syria and wait there till they could get their visas. My parents knew if we would leave to the United States we would be safer and get more opportunities to succeed in our lives.

Q. When, how and why did you first come to the United States?

I first came to the United States on December 1, 2007. We believed living in USA was much better than stay-

[See Iraq, pg 6]



Photo by Summer Malalla

Trolling for Truants

By Stephen Castaneda
Staff Writer

Not too long ago, local law enforcement officers did "truancy sweeps." Students under 18 found loitering in public places between 8:30 am and 1:30 pm were cited under Los Angeles Municipal Code (45.04). The student and a parent were required to appear at a local juvenile court. Fines were issued and sometimes the student was required to perform community service.

Now LAUSD has a better idea. On November 1, the District opened eight Attendance Improvement Cen-

[See Truants, pg 6]



Photo by Jennifer Martinez

Keeping the culture alive

Senior Maria Silva brings back the Aztec empire through dance

DANCE - page 5



Internet Photo

Getting Your Nerd On

"Black Ops," mobile devices promise plenty of digital holiday cheer.

TECH - page 7

OPINION

EDITORIAL

The Year In Review

A look back at a year to be thankful for.

Parrot Jessica Caballero received a full-ride scholarship to prestigious East Coast university MIT where she will major in Biochem. Caballero participated in the MITES summer program and the QuestBridge program. (January)

Poly's Leadership used an envelope drive and a bake sale to raise over \$2000 in two days for Haitian earthquake relief. (February)

Poly's Academic Decathlon team made it to the state competition in Sacramento for the first time in Parrot history. (March)

Parrot Principal Gerardo Loera announced that Poly will begin its new and unique "balanced traditional calendar," featuring January and July intersessions, on August 9, 2010, also a new and earlier start date than most LAUSD schools. (April)

Poly's Cheerleading squad scored 91.75 points to beat out 12 other schools and take the State Championship at Knott's Berry Farm. (May)

Magnet Coordinator Jayne Couchois received the Jaime Escalante award from the EnCorps Teachers Program, along with MIT's Dr. Jeffrey Hunt, who has mentored Parrot magnet students preparing to attend MIT. (June)

Poly's CST scores improved for the tenth straight year, moving the Parrot campus from the bottom 20% eight years ago to the top 20% of schools with similar demographics. (August)

Four hundred students attended a Parrot campus dance sponsored by the varsity boys' basketball team, the first on campus since 2007. (September)

Twenty members of the College Prep Club and their teacher/chaperones visited four California campuses in three days to see firsthand what life after Poly may hold in store. (October)

Members of Poly's 1990 City Championship football team attended Spirit Week festivities on Friday that included a pep rally, parade and 68-21 Homecoming win over the Dons of Verdugo Hills. (November)



It's Beginning to Look Somewhat Like Christmas

After Thanksgiving, the Christmas "season" begins. We start to hear jingles and jolly music. There's a Christmas spirit in the air and we love it. Sons and daughters bother parents for presents.

But I wonder, has the spirit of Christmas been dampened by the economy? For my family, Christmas has definitely changed since the 1990s.

In the old days, the whole family, from cousins to uncles, would gather and share presents. The Christmas tree was filled with gifts. There would be lots of food and laughter. That was the Christmas spirit, when money wasn't a worry.

The last few years have been lonely. I've spent the holidays with just my parents and siblings and we watched movies, nothing more. The rest of the family spends Christmas their own way.

What happened to the Christmas spirit? Has the depressed economy depressed the spirit of Christmas?

Not for some. Goldman Sachs, a big New York bank, paid its CEO \$53.4 million in 2006, 85 times as much as his average employee. A typical CEO now gets paid several hundred times the salary of his average worker. In Japan, the ratio is just 11-to-1,

and in Britain 22-to-1.

Before the Second World War, the richest one-half of one percent of Americans received 11 to 15 percent of all income, but from the fifties through the seventies, the income share of the superrich was reasonably cut back, by more than half. The rich were still plenty rich, but everybody had more.

Starting in the late eighties, however, the piece of the income pie taken each year by the rich has once again become hugely unequal. Meanwhile, median household income has gone up only 15% in 25 years. And for the last five years, median income has dropped.

In the old days, when the economy thrived, pay for working people rose accordingly. But since 2000, economic growth has not included any increase in real wages for most workers.

Yet Americans seem complacent instead of angry. Complacency is a bigger let down than the economy right now.

Christmas is supposed to be a time of family gatherings, eggnog and presents, but today many can't afford a traditional Christmas. Will better times and a recovering economy bring back the true spirit of Christmas?

OP-ED

DENISE ACOSTA

Party Like It's 1773

The Tea Party wants Obama out and government shrunk. And they're coming to a voting booth near you in 2012.

In 2008, many donned the now infamous pop-art inspired t-shirts with Obama's face. The image represented change and hope for America, and Obama quickly gained many supporters.

Two years later, some believe Obama's ambitious reform agenda has stalled and the President has yet to fulfill his promise. These Americans, more of an anti-party than a party, are determined to vote Obama out in 2012. "We'll remember in November," they chant. They are the Tea Party.

Sound familiar?

The Boston Tea Party of 1773 was a revolt against the tyranny of the British Parliament, who taxed the colonists for the tea the British exported to America. The tax was to pay back the money Britain spent on the French and Indian War. Parliament's action particularly angered the colonists because they were not represented in the government. Thus the phrase, "No taxation without representation" was born. When tea was shipped into Boston harbor, the colonists refused to pay the tax and threw the tea on the ships overboard.

The modern Tea Party began with an outburst by CNBC's Rick Santelli on February 19, 2009. He called for a "Chicago Tea Party" for "the capitalists out there."

But the Tea Party's agenda is not always clear. As Harvard historian Jill Lepore has pointed out, "It's a

party opposed to the idea of parties."

So what do the Tea Partiers really want? Equality and karma for the underdog, suggests author Michael Prell in "Underdogma."

Social conservatives make up the bulk of Tea Partiers. They are united by the belief that the federal government has become too large and powerful. They argue that support for big government programs from both Democrats and Republicans has blurred differences between the two parties. Government has protected the American people too much through welfare and safety nets, they claim. The nation is on the brink of disaster.

Supporters of the Tea Party are less likely than others to view discrimination as a threat to the nation's future. Many deny that global warming is a serious problem. Tea Party advocates are less sympathetic to illegal immigrants, claiming in the long run illegal immigrants cost taxpayers too much.

The Tea Party has no official leader, but Sarah Palin is a high-profile supporter and a probable candidate for president in 2012.

Tea Partiers believe the past eighty years of American history have defied karma, and the time has come for America to pay its dues. With 73% of Tea Party Republicans more enthusiastic than usual about voting this year, you can bet the Tea Party is here to stay. Even if they are not your cup of tea.



Celebrate and Donate

Helping the less fortunate should be part of the holiday season.

'T is the season to be jolly.

For most of us, the holiday season is a time to celebrate with food and gifts, friends and family. That is, unless you live in poverty.

This year more than ever, many can not afford to celebrate, or even provide the basics for their families. Countless families went to soup kitchens on Thanksgiving Day, and even more will go to local churches for Christmas gift giveaways. Shouldn't the holiday season also be a time for those who have enough to reach out to those that don't?

Poverty is not something we think about on a daily basis. We imagine homeless people are living in poverty, but we do not consider those families living in large homes with flat-screen televisions. But what if the owners of such homes recently lost their jobs? What if they got injured on the job, need expensive surgery and can no longer work? In the San Fernando Valley, many people are just getting by. Numerous families are one, two, or three paychecks away from living in poverty. Entire families can become poor in a matter of weeks.

The cost of living for Los Angeles county is higher than most of the country. While the national poverty line is \$22,050 a year for a family of four, in

LA, \$55,000 is more realistic. Anything less may not be enough to cover food, clothing, and shelter in the Los Angeles area.

So many people in Los Angeles are excessively materialistic, desiring expensive items they cannot afford. Having the most up-to-date fashions has become a way of life. But a lavish lifestyle can create debt and drive people into poverty.

So this holiday season, along with sharing food and gifts with friends and family, think about donating to a local charity, checking with your local church or hospital to see how you could help with a donation of time or money or maybe offering to help serve food for the homeless at a local shelter. Knowing you gave someone the best holiday experience they have had is truly a gift in itself.

This season, keep in mind the one in six people who go to sleep hungry, those who live on the streets, and all the underprivileged. Contributions to charities are down this year. Anyone can make a small donation or dedicate a portion of their time to give back to the community. This year more than ever, a little help can make a big difference.

After all, poverty is not something that is necessarily far from anybody.



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.

INTERVIEW

Music Man

Parrot grad José Luís Oseguera Jr. sings Schubert at CSUN.

By Joel Hinojosa
Editor in Chief



Photos provided by José Luís Oseguera Jr.

SINGERS: Poly grad Jose Luis Oseguera with fellow CSUN student Bitu Ashtari after an end-of-session performance at CSUN.

Poly '03 grad José Luís Oseguera Jr. has found his musical voice in the music department at California State University Northridge. The OPTIMIST recently talked to Oseguera about his new-found love of all things musical.

Influences

I grew up listening to The Beatles and would sing along to their songs ever since I was a child. Through these songs, I unconsciously and inadvertently was training my ear and building my musicianship skills that later would help me become a singer and musician.

I attended Byrd Middle School in Sun Valley, where I sang in choir and played trombone in the school's wind ensemble. This experience helped me a great deal because it taught me how to read music and created a strong musical foundation on which to build more knowledge and musical skills.

While at Poly, I started to take guitar lessons and learn songs by the Beatles. During this time, I also joined a band and sang lead and backup vocals.

Once I graduated from Poly, I wanted to major in music, but since I had no formal classical guitar training, I was not able to audition and get into the music program. So I took English as my major.

A couple of years later, I took a singing class and the teacher told me that I had a good voice and that I should take a lesson with her. I took her up on her offer and took a couple of lessons with her. She told me that I had a lot of potential and that I should consider auditioning for the voice faculty. I coached a couple of songs with her, auditioned, and was accepted.

My teacher really helped me discover this hidden talent of mine. I had no idea I could sing like that. According to my teacher, I am a lyric baritone; which is a lower male voice that can also sing high notes like a tenor (the highest male voice). Since I hadn't really done much singing prior to that singing class I took at CSUN, other than singing rock/pop music, my teacher told me that my voice was very fresh and at the same time developed and mature.

“I am currently singing French, Italian, German, Spanish, and English repertoire and hope to someday sing in the great opera houses all across Europe and the U.S.”

CSUN

The music program at CSUN is very diverse because it houses many different majors. For instance, there is a major called Music Industry which deals with the music business. Music Education trains people to be music educators for grades K-12.

The Music Therapy major helps to treat people with many mental and emotional conditions. There is a Composition and Conducting major. Last but not least, there is a Performance major that includes all of the instruments in an orchestra and jazz band and the human voice.

All students are required to take courses known as musician-ship classes. These classes train your ear and introduce complex musical concepts that are present in music. Music students are also required to take music theory and music history and on top of that they still have to take General Education courses like Biology, Psychology, Math, and English.

Another requirement is to take private lessons with a teacher and to be part of an ensemble. I personally am part of the Northridge Singers, CSUN's top choir.

A typical day in the life of a music student would include non-music classes, music classes, practice with an ensemble, and at least two hours of solitary practice in a practice room. It is important for a musician to practice daily and for at least two hours a day because it is a vital part of becoming a professional.

Favorites

My favorite composer is Franz Schubert because I love his songs or “Lieder”, which is German for songs. In fact, he wrote over 900 of them in his short lifetime (he died at the age of 31). Besides Schubert, I also love Beethoven, Johannes Brahms, Joseph Haydn, and Johann Sebastian Bach. When it comes to music you can say I am a Germanophile. In fact, I am currently studying German in my spare time. Moreover, I am currently singing French, Italian, German, Spanish, and English repertoire and hope to someday sing in the great opera houses all across Europe and the U.S.

Starting next year, I will be completing my Bachelors in Vocal Performance and commencing my Masters in Vocal Performance. After that I would like to go on and earn a Doctoral degree in Vocal Performance as well.



DANDIES: “Washington Dandies” (from left) Derik Dermegerdichian, Shay Hamblin, Jose Oseguera and Steve Vail in CSUN's production of “The Ballad of Baby Doe.”

FASHION



STEPHANIE RIVERA

NAVY SHORTS / WHITE PEASANT BLOUSE / BLACK HEELS

“SWAG COMES FROM CONFIDENCE, NOT FROM STYLE”

Accepted FIDM (Fashion Institute Design and Merchandising) in LA



YVETTE PENA

BLACK LACE TOP / BLACK AND BEIGE SKIRT (FOREVER21) / BLACK STRAP SANDALS

“LIFE IS NOT A RE-HEARSAL, THE CAMERA IS ALWAYS ROLLING”



MARILI MONGE

WHITE TOP W/NAVY STRIPES / NAVY SKIRT (URBAN OUTFITTERS) / BLACK SANDALS.

“A GIRL SHOULD BE TWO THINGS: CLASSY AND FABULOUS”



MAYRA CASTRO

BURGUNDY SILK TOP W/FITTED BLACK SKIRT / GRAY SANDALS / VINTAGE FLORAL BLACK DRESS (FOREVER21)

“KEEP SMILING, BECAUSE LIFE’S A BEAUTIFUL THING AND THERE’S SO MUCH TO SMILE ABOUT”



FOUR FOR FASHION



Photography by Alex Cadena

ON THE GO: (from left) Stephanie Rivera, Mayra Castro, Marili Monge, Yvette Pena.

DANCE



DANZA AZTECA

By Jennifer Martinez
Photographer

Poly junior Maria Luz Silva dazzled a pep rally audience of Parrots with her dance moves recently. So the OPTIMIST asked her to tell us about the dance and herself. Here's what she said.

The DANCE

The dance is from México. I believe it is Teotihuacán, México. It's from around the 1500s, when the Aztec empire ruled México.

There are different energies - the female, males, young warriors, children, elders, death. We don't necessarily base it on gods like other dances.

Most of our steps have to do with wind, water, animals moving around. For our turns it's usually based on how wind moves the dirt around when it spins like a tornado.

Other cultures use those steps to explain a story. We use our body movements to tell the story and some people use words to explain. The dance I did last Friday was for warriors; with the hand movements as the shield and the sword, as their weapons.

The clothing is made of manta, which is material that comes from plants or cotton or leather. We don't use plastic or synthetics.

Most of the time, when you do see the dance, it's in big groups all gathered to do one thing.

The dance is difficult if you don't have the eye and foot coordination because whatever you see, you do it at the same time. But if you're determined to learn, you'll learn it. You just have to be passionate and determined.

You don't have to be a professional dancer to do this. As long as you have fun and are willing to learn. It's mostly based on having fun while expressing your culture. That's how I see it.

The DANCER

I've always loved these kinds of cultural dances, but I had a couple of teachers. Two of them, Omeakatl and Chimalli, graduated from Poly a few years back. My other teacher, Ehekalli, went to Sylmar, I believe. But none of them started until after high school. They learned from elders in México and they brought it back to the younger ones now, the new generation. So that's who we're learning it from.

There's a group down at the Sun Valley Park and they've done it for 9-10 years already. About 4 years ago, I decided to show up one Friday while

they were practicing and just jump in. Since I live by there and since my parents are from México, we've always been involved with cultural things, so they just caught my attention and I followed it.

I've been dancing for about four or five years now. It's always been a thing that I've been involved in since I was little because I have some relatives that are from tribes and a lot of friends that are native, so I've always wanted to try it.

One of my teachers was teaching me West African dance. That's not what I'm in to, but I still wanted to try it. I was also involved in Folklorico for a while.

Two of my cousins have done Folklorico and they're doing it again, but they're not into the Aztec tribal stuff like me. They're into the more modern type of dance.

As far as dancing professionally, I have had offers to lead major groups, but I feel like I'm not ready to move on yet because I still have a lot to learn. If I were to move up professionally, it would be to teach others, not just for my own benefit. I want to let everybody know that culture is still here and we're dedicated to teaching others.

We have done ceremonies in Pacoima and San Jose. In Pacoima we usually do "Dia de las Animas/Muertos", the "Day of the Dead" ceremony and in San Jose we do our "Mexica New Year," which is our Aztec new year; we celebrate it in the second week of March. It's a major event for everyone; we have natives from up north and natives from down south.

I was probably around thirteen when I discovered what they were teaching at the park. I am a quick learner when it comes to dancing so it took me a week and I was already in it. When it comes to dancing, I can catch on quick.

The dancing is special for me because I feel like I have something to give to people to let them know that our culture is still alive. We have to bring it back to show people what we're about. That's the meaning of the dance for me.

For fun, I learn drum beats. People see our drums as a bongo or a conga, but we call it a Huehuetl because it's like our grandfather's.

To do these dances, you don't have to be fat, you don't have to be skinny, as long as you're active, because it can help as exercise or it could be just a hobby. Some people do use it as exercise but I don't. I see it as a way of expressing my feelings towards my culture and to teach others.



GOING NATIVE: Junior Maria Silva demonstrates ancient Mexican dance.

Photos by Jennifer Martinez

CAMPUS



Photo by Bill Coleman

TOP SCORER: Parrot standout running back Kevin Ervin scored four touchdowns against Palisades in the CIF quarterfinals. Ervin had 26 points and 336 yards rushing in Poly's 50-40 loss.

Pali Plucks Poly 50-40

[From Pali, pg 1]

Highlanders 43-13.

Palisades' win Friday over Poly pits the Dolphins against Chatsworth on the road in a semifinal game.

And no one has made a bigger turnaround than 10-2 Chatsworth after the Chancellors won just two games last year.

QB Curtis Ervin joined a month into the season - Chatsworth is 7-1 with him as a starter - while running back D'ondre Alexander has rushed for 1,255 yards with 25 touchdowns after starting the season as a fourth-stringer.

"We're doing a pretty good job. I'm happy to be winning," coach Jason Camp said.

For complete Lady Parrot volleyball playoff finals coverage, see page 8.

Truants

[From Truants, pg 1]

ters (AIC) as a "deterrent/intervention program for truants."

The centers will serve as an alternative to truancy citations.

"We intend to get students back on track by providing options to truancy and drop out," said LAUSD Chief Academic Officer Dr. Judy Elliott.

Dealing with truants is nothing new for LA school officials, of course.

"Truant hordes run the streets, blissfully free and blissfully ignorant," noted an 1896-97 LA Board of Education Annual Report.

The Board urged the public to save these children from "reformatories, hospitals, asylums, and penitentiaries."

In 1903, California passed the state's first compulsory school attendance law. The law required children eight to fourteen "to attend school at least five months, of which 18 weeks must be consecutive."

From the first, early attendance supervisors, called "hookey cops," worked with police companions, prowling the streets on horses, motorcycles, or in busses to pick up truants.

Today's AICs are also a collaborative effort between LAUSD and local law enforcement. The centers' goals are to improve attendance, reduce juvenile crimes and increase parent involvement and accountability.

"AICs are one way to keep students in schools and off the streets," Elliott said.

Truants are more likely to become involved with drugs, alcohol, gangs and violence than youth who attend school, according to LAUSD officials. Truancy can cause students to fall behind in school and drop out. Dropouts have higher rates of incarceration and addiction, lower-paying jobs and a greater tendency for unemployment over their lifetime.

The AICs also provide truant students with a safe educational program during the school day while they await parent pick up. While at the AICs, students will receive instruction and are required to complete grade-level work.

Students held at the AICs must exhibit appropriate behavior. The objective is to teach students to assume responsibility for their actions, to learn to exercise self-control and to provide them with an intervention that can guide them towards success.

The AICs are located at Sepulveda, Burbank, El Sereno and Gage Middle Schools and Belmont, Santee, Washington Preparatory and San Pedro Senior Highs.

Los Angeles Unified School District is the nation's second largest and has the highest poverty rate in California.

Poly Grad Back in Iraq

[From Iraq, pg 1]

ing in Arab countries because most Iraqis, including us, are mistreated by Arabs. Not all of them, of course. Most of them actually were very nice, but that wasn't enough.

We went to California because my father had his friend living there for more than 30 years, so it's nice to go live next to people we know better than people we don't know.

My brother and I attended Poly from January, 2008 till June 2009. I graduated from Poly and my brother was a junior by 2009. We went to Poly because the daughters of my father's friend used to go there and he told us about your school.

Attending Poly was a very nice experience for me. I didn't have much difficulty with the language and adjusting to the school was easy for me. All the teachers were nice to me and there are teachers I haven't forgotten about and I try to write to them from time to time. Even though many students were from very different cultures, I was able to learn stuff about their culture and teach them about mine. Especially me and my best friend ever, Dalia Ma'ayah, who was and still is my best friend and like a sister to me. The time I spent there is unforgettable.

Q. You went back to Iraq. Why?

Because we heard from our relatives in Iraq that the situation is better than before and because we couldn't stay as a family divided into two places, we decided to go back. At least till my brother and sister get their visas, and we had in mind if something went wrong with the situation in here, we would leave to US again.

Q. How is daily life in Baghdad today?

The dangerous thing in here is you can't feel safe if you go out. Girls could be kidnapped from the street and get raped, or guys could be taken to jail simply without any crime; only because they are men. A car could explode in the street while it's very crowded with people. You have to go to school or work, or even go out trying to have fun or get some air having in mind one of these things could happen at any moment. And if you are lucky enough, nothing will happen to you.

We can get food and water. Getting electricity depends on schedules, so we have to buy a generator or pay someone who has one to provide us with electricity when we don't have it. This applies to everyone, Muslims, Christians, everyone, regardless of their ethnicity or religion.

Q. Did you expect that the political situation in Iraq today would be better?

We returned for two reasons, thinking that it's safer than before, and to be with my older sister and brother.

Q. What do you think most Poly students don't understand about Iraq?

I think they wouldn't understand the fact that America didn't come to free us as they claimed they would do. They destroyed us.

Before we used to be a country even though ruled by a dictatorship, but now we have a puppet government who won't do anything till they get the approval of Iran and America. America opened the gates for real terrorists to come to Iraq and destroy it.

Our treasures and golden antiques were stolen. Millions of Iraqis left their homes. Even the ones who live in Iraq now don't feel as safe as they used to. They feel like it's not their home anymore, not the one they used to belong to.

There were times that Americans went into houses saying that they were attacking ter-

rorists and instead they raped the girls in the houses, took the men to prisons without a crime, and stole the money and gold jewelry from the families they attacked. Not to mention hitting guys and humiliating them in front of their families. Militias do the same and they do it with the support of the American Army.

I want to tell the students that not everything you hear on the news is true, and TV doesn't show all the reality. And Muslims are not terrorists as they hear; we are normal human beings who have our own beliefs and thoughts.

QuestBridge

[From Quest, pg 1]

QuestBridge and discovered the program was extremely competitive. Honestly, I was discouraged; I felt I was not the smartest person in the school nor the best leader. I had not overcome extreme adversity to lead a normal life. However, I was dedicated to my schoolwork, activities, and community. I would be a first-generation college student, and I had overcome many obstacles.

APPLYING

Applying to QuestBridge was an extensive process. I had to provide information about my financial background, academic interests, extracurricular involvement, grades, tests, and three essays. There was also a short response portion where I reported things such as my favorite genre of music, my heroes, my source of inspiration, and how I typically spend my weekends. Everything about the application was detailed.

Although I had practice for cheer and homework for my classes, I would stay up late to work on my application. My motivation was entirely based on probability. I knew I was facing slim odds, like playing the lottery, but I asked myself, "What if I do get in, what if somehow they realize how much I want this and decide to give me the opportunity?"

The upside of the application process was that I knew myself better. Before, I had never stopped to ponder who inspired me or what historic event I wished I could have taken part in. I knew what books were my favorite, but I had never taken the time to compile a list of my top five.

When I wrote my biographical essay, I reflected on how the type of life I lived influenced who I was and who I wanted to become. I was aware of what had inspired me to pursue a higher education, but now I found myself reflecting on it in a way that gave new meaning to the experience. I was meeting myself all over again.

Apart from the online application, I also had to send my transcripts, two teacher letters of recommendations, and a counselor portion.

On October 22, I checked my e-mail like any other day. When I saw the QuestBridge address, I clicked on it and closed my eyes. I wanted to know, but I also did not want to be disappointed.

"We are pleased to inform you," I read, "that you have been chosen as a finalist for the 2010 QuestBridge National College Match." I almost cried. I had never been a finalist for anything before, and it felt great.

DYNASTY

In the past six years, QuestBridge has paired over 900 students with admission and full scholarships to prestigious universities. Through their regular decision program, QuestBridge has provided more than 3,000 students with admission to partner colleges and financial aid packages.

Poly keeps improving each year, especially in the number of students being accepted to competitive programs and prestigious universities. This year, Poly has four finalists for the National College Match Program. Next year, it will be more. Poly is building a dynasty.

SUDOKU

December 2010

		8			3			7
9			1	6				
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		1	4			5		
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November 2010 Solution

6	9	8	3	5	1	7	4	2
5	4	2	9	7	6	1	3	8
3	1	7	4	2	8	5	6	9
2	5	4	7	6	3	9	8	1
7	3	6	8	1	9	4	2	5
1	8	9	2	4	5	3	7	6
9	6	3	5	8	4	2	1	7
4	7	1	6	9	2	8	5	3
8	2	5	1	3	7	6	9	4

Merry
Christmas
from
the
OPTIMIST

TECHNOLOGY

TECH TALK
WITH
JOEL HINOJOSA



Call of Duty: Black Ops

Want to assassinate Fidel Castro during the Bay of Pigs invasion? Maybe break out of a Soviet prison camp in the Arctic? Pilot a gunboat through the Mekong Delta, shooting up sampans while listening to “Sympathy for the Devil?”

Sure you do.

And you can. Activision and Santa Monica-based developer Treyarch just released “Call of Duty Black Ops” with all the above scenarios.

The story is the first in the series to feature the Cold War. Main character Alex Mason is tortured for answers to questions related to a series of numbers.

GADGETS for Geeks

Put one of these under the Christmas tree and bring out the real nerd in anyone.



Apple’s new generation touch screen device, the iPod touch, adds HD video and FaceTime to its already impressive list of functions, as well as a speedy A4 processor chip that makes complex tasks like multitasking and video editing a breeze.

Video conversations with friends on FaceTime on a Wi-Fi network are another plus. The touch’s two two-way cameras, one in front above the display and the other behind in the top corner, allows users to switch between face shots and landscape.

The 3.5-inch widescreen multi-touch LCD backlit display has 960 x 640 pixels of resolution or 326 pixels per inch, the best to date. For gaming, the iPod

is built with a three-axis gyro for full 3D motion on par with an accelerometer.

The touch has 100,000-plus applications, including games, utilities, reference, health and social networking, plus pre-installed apps like Game Center, a leaderboard for competitive gamers.

An 8GB touch retails for \$229, with upgrades running \$299 for 32GB and \$399 for 64.

For a “touching” holiday, the iPod touch 4 gen. gets the job done.

The iPod touch is \$229 for 8GB, \$299 for 32GB and \$399 for a 64GB model.



Apple iPod Touch 4th Generation



Xbox 360 Kinect

Like a shark, technology never sleeps. Xbox 360 has gone Wii one better, creating control-free gaming with its new “Kinect” for Xbox 360. Originally named “Project Natal,” the Kinect is like an interactive webcam that tracks player’s gestures and speak commands.

The Kinect works with a RGB sensor, depth sensor and multi-array microphone. The sensors capture full-body 3D images and recognize faces, while the microphone has voice recognition capabilities.

Users sign in by face recognition or “click” on by placing a hand over a hub and until it “clicks.”

Kinect gamers, 22 million and counting, currently have about 20 games to chose from, including Harry Potter Deathly Hallows Part 1, Sonic Riders, Michael Jackson the Experience, Dance Central and Kinectimals.

The gameplay is simple for Kinect games. Dancing games involves dancing to the rhythm shown on the screen. Sport games involve getting physical and interacting with balls and all sorts of sport actions. Other games like Harry Potter involves making gestures, in this case to expel magic.

Best Buy sells a 4GB Xbox 360 S, Kinect and a game for \$299.99. Gamestop has multiple Kinect bundles with Kinect device and three games for \$249.97.

Much of the game plays out through black operations Mason recovers from his memory, hence the name “Black Ops.”

“Ops” selling point is the online multiplayer and maps like Nuke Town, a fake town full of dummies for nuclear research. The kill streaks, perks and weapons have been changed.

Treyarch added CoD points, in which players earn money for perks, weapons and more. The company, influenced by the economic system, created new matches like Wager Matches, where players bet CoD points to increase their stash.

Nazi Zombie is back, with zombie maps now online, and users can play John F. Kennedy, Robert McNamara, Richard Nixon or Fidel Castro in the map “Five.”

“Black Ops” retails at \$59.99, \$79.99 for the Hardened Edition (added maps, metal case, medal) and \$149.99 for the Prestige Edition (added maps, metal case, medal, RC-XD vehicle with surveillance).

Warning: Black Ops is rated for mature audiences only. The game has violence, gore and profanity.

SPORTS



Photo by Jennifer Martinez

WAITING: Seniors Viri Gallardo and Jocelyn Lopez wait for Pali serve in second game of CIF championship match at Roybal. The Dolphins won 3-0.

Pali Spikes Parrots

Dolphins romp through CIF City finals; Poly finishes 27-6.

By Kelsey Cruz
Sports Editor

Poly's quest for the CIF championship hit a wall called Palisades Saturday afternoon at Roybal Learning Center. The Lady Parrots were never in the contest, with only a close 26-24 second-game loss saving them from an embarrassing afternoon. The other games were 25-15 Parrot losses.

"We couldn't get it together," said senior libero Ana Aparicio. "We weren't talking and we had no momentum. We let their momentum come up and make us lose."

"I think some people on the team were kind of nervous that we made it that far," said senior co-captain Viri Gallardo.

"Our team wasn't our team," said senior setter Daisy Orellana. "We were playing as individuals, and that made the difference."

The Dolphins dominated the crucial first game, setting the tone with a coordinated attack and a strong defense. Pali jumped out to a quick 8-1 lead and Poly never threatened.

"We didn't talk at all and we didn't play as a team," said Gallardo.

"When we're communicating, everybody knows what's going on on the court, and we didn't do that," said Aparicio.

The Lady Parrots play a more determined second game and led 25-24, but let Pali back in the contest with a serving error. The Dolphins quickly capitalized on Poly's mistake.

"If we had won that game," said Gallardo, "it would have built our momentum, and we would have probably won the whole thing."

The last game was all Pali, with Dolphin spikes hitting hardwood instead of Parrot hands. Poly too often seemed out of position and Pali consistently found the holes.

"You need the six people on that court that want it," said Aparicio. "If five people want it and one person doesn't, then it's over. You need those six people on that court."

"You're only as strong as your weakest player, that's what our coach would always tell us," said Orellana.

"I think we did give it to them," said Aparicio. "They're a good team, but we did give it to them."

Poly ended their season 27-6 overall and 12-0 in league.

"I'm proud of everyone because

"Our team wasn't our team. We were playing as individuals, and that made the difference."

- Daisy Orellana

in the end, we weren't just like teammates, we were actually growing as a team," said Gallardo. "People on the team that we didn't really talk to, we talk to a lot now."

"We beat the number one seed, and Pali beat the number two seed, so everybody expected us to win," said Orellana, "but it's over now and there's nothing we can do about it."

Stunts Man

The brains behind those daredevil stunts the cheerleaders perform is a Poly grad.

By Stephanie Rodriguez
Staff Writer

Poly grad, former cheerleader and current stunt coach Bryan Escobar has a good idea of what a stunt should accomplish.

"A stunt should give the impression of 'WOW, how could they do that,'" Escobar said.

Escobar says his job is to bring originality, choreography, and the right music to each stunt.

"But in the end, it isn't a one-person show," Escobar says. "It takes teamwork to achieve what we need to."

Stunts aren't as easy as they may look. Take the "tic-toc," for example.

"A tic toc is a stunt where the flyer [person on top] goes up, then goes down, is tossed and switches feet in the process," Escobar said. "A flyer has to be really tight, and have good body control and good focus on the transitioning foot. The backspot controls the flyer and needs to pull up the stunt a lot."

Making the Grades

Tennis girls post strong record and high GPA.

By Kelsey Cruz
Sports Editor

They didn't make the playoffs, but this year's Lady Parrot varsity tennis squad might still take home an award. The girls' 3.64 team Grade Point Average (GPA) puts them in the running.

"The district has an award for the team with the highest GPA," said Lady Parrot tennis coach Evan Rabins, "and I don't think it's just tennis. I think it's all the different teams in different sports and different schools, every varsity sport."

Rabins thinks the girls may have a shot.

"If you have a 3.64 GPA, you could be on the Dean's list and be a member of the California Scholarship Federation (CSF)," Rabins said. "And this GPA is without giving us the extra points the girls deserve for taking AP classes and college courses, which a lot of them are. There are some really good students on the team."

A student who takes an AP or college class gets an extra point. A "B" grade in one of these classes counts as an "A."

"If you count those classes," Rabins said, "the team GPA would be more like 3.85, which is really, really impressive. I'm really proud of the girls."

Considering the Lady Parrots had 18 girls on this year's tennis team, that GPA number is even more impressive. And so is their dedication.

"Being on the team takes a lot of your time," Rabins said. "You have to have a lot of responsibility and manage your time and make sure that you're getting everything done that you need to get done and still show up to practice and the games. You're missing a lot of class time. The kids leave early out of their 3rd and 4th period all the time for the away games."

Rabins said he was pleased with the progress of this year's team on the court too.

"We started at a pretty good point," Rabins said, "because a lot of the girls were on the team last year, so they knew each other. Really, the outsider was me."

"I was really impressed at what good teammates the girls were to each other. They really tried to help each other, which was really nice. Whether we grew a lot, I think we grew closer. We got to know each other a bit better."

League competition was tough this year.

"Of the teams we played, three teams out of our



Photo by Alejandro Cadena

SERVER: Senior #4 singles Wendy Keo contributed to the Lady Parrots' 5-0 start and best season in years.

league made the playoffs," said Rabins. "We lost six times and we got six wins, so the teams we were supposed to lose to, we lost to."

Looking ahead to next year, Rabins said he is concerned about losing many of this year's veteran squad to graduation.

"Next season we're going to be challenged," Rabins said, "because we're losing a lot of seniors this year. We had 18 girls this year and 10 or 11 were seniors. So we're losing a lot of seniors and obviously the seniors are the ones with a lot of experience, the most physically mature, the most confident and a lot of good things that we want."

Lady Parrots who are interested in being on the tennis team next year should contact Rabins in room 218.

"We need players," Rabins said. "We don't have enough players to fill the team next year. You don't have to be great at tennis, you only have to like to play, and we'll teach you how to play."



Photo by Jennifer Martinez

SMILES: Poly stunt coach Bryan Escobar with cheer squad.

"I want to put things that people haven't seen before, be original. That way people don't get bored with the stunts."

- Cheer stunt coach Bryan Escobar

"I want to put things that people haven't seen before, be original," Escobar said. "That way people don't get bored with the stunts."

The cheer team definitely hasn't hit their highest point yet, according to Escobar.

"I have really high expectations," Escobar says. "We need to have an undefeated season again."

Cheer competition begins soon.

"Starting January, we hope to attend nationals," Escobar said. "I'm hoping for a great season. Last year we were undefeated. We are planning to do some crazy creative stunts that will just give a major wow factor."

Escobar, 18, grew up in Montebello, California and was a Poly cheerleader for three years. He plans to attend a culinary art school.