



Happy Valentine's Day!

El Carmelo Calendar

- Feb. 3 Parent Education: Denise Pope on "Resiliency," Fairmeadow Elementary, 9am
- Feb. 3 Auction Art Session for 1st grade, MP Room, 1:30-3pm
- Feb. 4 Bingo Night, MP Room, 6-8pm
- Feb. 9 PTA General Meeting, Library, 8:30am
- Feb. 10 Auction Art Session for 2nd grade, MP Room, 1:30-2:30pm
- Feb. 11, Feb. 12, Feb. 15 No School
- Feb. 20 Pancake Breakfast, 9-10:30am
- Feb. 23-24 School Play Auditions
- Feb. 25 Carmeletter Submission Deadline for March 5th publication



Principal's Letter



I want to begin by thanking the many PTA volunteers who have been involved in so many of the family activities that we have been enjoying so far this year: the picnics, Family Game Night, Ice Skating, Lego Night, the preparation activities for the Auction, the Book Exchange and Family Service Day, for example. There have been even more activities than these and more individual volunteers than I could name in this space. Thank you to all who were coordinators and to everyone who helped make these fun events happen.

I would also like to thank those parents who have committed to organize upcoming events such as:

Bingo Night – Thursday, February 4
 Pancake Breakfast – Saturday, February 20
 Math and Science Exploration – Sunday, March 27
 Stories Under the Stars – Wednesday, March 24

These activities are the reason for El Carmelo's well-deserved reputation for community-building. I'd like to encourage you to join us at one of the activities that you haven't been to and see what it's all about. It could inspire you to think about volunteering to coordinate one of these events in the future. It's a great way to contribute to the life and culture of El Carmelo.

I have been writing about the Peaceful Playgrounds curriculum and materials that are new this year. Another aspect of Peaceful Playgrounds that we have begun to implement is the "Good Sport Coupon." Experts say that a great way to teach and reinforce positive behavior is to recognize it when you see it in kids. To that end, the noon supervisors and other staff have coupons that can be given to children on the playground for demonstrating good sportsmanship or kindness towards another student. So far the response to these coupons has been just as we have hoped. The mere fact of being recognized for positive acts is what should influence our children the most. I will keep you updated as we continue to implement new ideas.

Sincerely,
 Chuck Merritt
 Principal

PTA President's Letter



If you haven't already, you will begin to hear about a Parcel Tax Renewal coming up for a vote in May 2010. The campaign is called "**Support Palo Alto Schools 2010.**"

The PAUSD parcel tax was originally approved by over 70% of local voters in 2001 and renewed by over 70% of local voters in 2005. Now this funding is once again set to expire. If the \$493 parcel tax does expire and our schools lose \$9.4 million in annual funding on top of the other funding reductions, the impact on each and every one of our schools will be devastating.

On Tuesday, January 12, our Board of Education voted unanimously to place a measure on the ballot this spring to renew our expiring school parcel tax for six years and increase the rate by \$96 (\$8 per month) to \$589. This Parcel Tax renewal and modest increase will help offset budget cuts to teachers and core instructional programs. There's an exemption available for seniors over 65 (they apply annually). The Parcel Tax measure needs 66.7% of the votes to pass.

A Parcel tax pays for **People & Programs** - teachers, small class sizes, course offerings and instructional programs - not to be confused with the Bond measure passed in 2008, which pays for buildings, equipment and furnishings. By law, bond funds may not be used for operational costs like teachers and programs. Simply speaking: parcel tax = people & programs, bond = buildings.

This election will be conducted entirely by mail, and there will be no polling places. All registered voters will received a ballot the week of April 5 and all ballots are due by May 4, 2010. You will be receiving more information regarding this measure soon.

In the meantime, the El Carmelo PTA Board will vote on a resolution in support of the Parcel Tax in early February and will bring the resolution to a general El Carmelo PTA Meeting for a vote on Tuesday, February 9, 2010. Please take the time to learn what this measure means to the school district and how it will affect your children at El Carmelo. Then, take the time to fill out and return your ballot before the May 4 deadline.

Our teachers and kids thank you.

Jennifer Mutz
PTA President

Pancake Breakfast - Saturday, Feb. 20, 9:00 - 10:30am

You are all invited to the Pancake Breakfast on Saturday, February 20 in the MP Room! We start serving food at 9:00 am and the kitchen closes at 10:30 am.

\$3.00 adults
\$1.00 children
and \$1 off if you bring your own non-disposable cups and plates.

Come join us for the Pancake Breakfast, a true tradition at El Carmelo Elementary for many, many years.

Andrea Jelks
Pancake Breakfast Chair

3rd, 4th and 5th Graders: Be Part of El Carmelo's Upcoming Play!

El Carmelo, in conjunction with the Palo Alto Children's Theater, will present ***Once Upon a Shoe***. It is the very funny story of how Mother Goose's children saves the family from having to move from its large, comfortable shoe to an old sneaker in the wrong part of town.

This experience is open to 3rd, 4th and 5th graders. The only requirement is attending all scheduled rehearsals and performances. Any exceptions must be cleared with the director in advance. **There can be no conflicts with the rehearsal schedule Tuesday, March 30 through Wednesday, April 7.** Students that are stage shy or cannot attend rehearsals can be part of the backstage crew although they must be present during tech week (April 3 - 7). All rehearsals and performances will take place in the Multi-Purpose room at El Carmelo.

There is no cost to participate, and all sets and costumes are provided by the Children's Theater. Parents will help supervise the students during rehearsals and performances as well as help with makeup, tickets and organizing the cast party.

Scripts are available in El Carmelo's library for students to check out.

Important Dates to Remember:

Auditions:

Tuesday, February 23, 3-5pm
Wednesday, February 24, 1:40-4pm

Rehearsals:

Rehearsals - Tuesdays through Fridays after school until 6pm. First rehearsal is Tuesday, March 2, 2:50-5:30pm followed by a Parent Meeting.
Tech rehearsals - Saturday April 3 and Monday through Wednesday, April 5-7, ending no later than 6:30pm.

Performance dates:

Thursday, April 8, 4:30pm
Friday, April 9, 7:00pm
Saturday, April 10, 2:00pm & 7:00pm – please note this is the first weekend of Spring Break

For additional information please contact:
Ana-Maria Dias, El Carmelo Theater Chair
650-326-5854, anamaria_am99@yahoo.com

Auction News

By *Carrie Leontis*

The auction is Friday, March 26th at the University Club.

The deadline for donating to the auction has been extended! Donations are now due Thursday, February 18th. This gives you a little more time to put your creativity to work and contribute to our school!

Don't forget that the auction is the biggest fundraiser for our PTA. We need your help!

Here's the auction challenge: our goal is to get more families involved in the whole process. Ask a friend what she or he is donating. Generate ideas together. Challenge each other to make a donation. Then, plan to go to the auction together!

If you only have a little time to get something together, here are some very simple ideas to inspire you...

Gift certificate for a favorite restaurant or spa
 Gift basket (spa, chocolate, coffee and tea, wine, books for kids or adults)
 Event tickets
 Deliver a homemade specialty food or sweet treat
 Cash (helps underwrite items for the live auction)

If you have more time to offer, we challenge you to try one of these...

Host an evening for adults (dinner, wine tasting, game night, theme party)
 Host a family movie or game night
 Teach or offer a skill for kids or adults (cooking lessons, gardening, music lessons, dance lessons)
 Host a gathering for kids (art, flashlight tag, knitting, horseback riding, etc.)

Let's take a moment to remember why we're doing this... it's for our kids! Here's how your donation supports the PTA: computers for classrooms, field trips and classroom projects, classroom supplies, noon art and activities, library books, visiting authors, and the homework center.

So, please take a moment to donate today. Whether it's something small and simple or more complex, it's all needed. Just fill out the form online at www.elcarmelo.paloaltopta.org/auction/familydonationform.html or fill out a form located in the office. Don't let the deadline pass you by!

For questions please contact:

Ana-Maria Dias
 Auction Chair
 650-326-5854, Anamaria_am99@yahoo.com



Please Help El Carmelo Help Haiti

El Carmelo's Leadership Club is sponsoring a relief fund drive to help the people of Haiti.

Please look for the donation box at the Book Exchange and Give It All Away events.

Donations can also be made directly in the office. Just drop your donation directly in the box marked Haiti Relief Fund.

All donations collected will be sent directly to the American Red Cross.

Donations will be accepted in the form of checks and small bills. We are not able to collect coin donations. Our fund drive runs through Friday, February 12th.

El Carmelo Leadership Club's Tree Planting Project

By Carrie Manley

Our campus recently got **greener**, thanks to the many caring kids in our El Carmelo Leadership Club!

Dozens of El Carmelo Leadership Club members helped plant three new beautiful trees along the west side of the school next to Ramona Street, with the help of the respected local non-profit, Canopy. The Leadership Club decided to plant trees as a way to help our planet, our community and our school, by providing shade, fresh air, and homes for animals.

32 kids helped dig holes and then loosened the roots of each tree for planting. Next, they carefully placed the trees in the holes, making sure to place each tree at the right height, so that the roots would be covered and the bark would be safely above ground. Then the students worked together, filling holes, building dirt basins to help collect water for the trees and adding mulch around the base of each tree. They finished by helping to pound sturdy stakes into the ground on each side of the trees to provide support.

The entire after-school project took about two hours of hard work shortly before Winter Break, with the help of Canopy Program Director *Sharon Kelly* and Canopy volunteers *Hans Weber* and *Marty Deggeller*.

Here are some new vocabulary words the kids learned by doing!

Mulch--chopped up wood we use to cover the soil to hold moisture in and to keep the weeds down.

Berm--the dirt basin we make to hold more water close to the tree to help it grow.

Bubble system--the system that provides a steady water source (irrigation) to our new tree. Each new tree needs 10-15 gallons a week to thrive.

Tamp--to pat down the soil, to avoid large, underground air bubbles, while still not packing so tightly that the roots can't grow.

We **stake** the trees because we want to give the roots a chance to get established, a process that takes about two to three years. Until then, a tree is more at risk of blowing over, or getting knocked over, without the added support of the stakes.

Here's what some of our budding arborists say they learned:

Jade: "It's definitely not easy to plant a tree, you don't just stick it in the ground. You have to separate the roots, so they can spread out. You have to tamp down the dirt, but not pressure it too hard. But if you leave too many big air bubbles, the roots will end up burning, when the air heats up underground in the summer."

Deo: "Mulching is throwing chopped-up bark on the berm. It keeps the water in the soil and it keeps the soil warm."

And, if you are wondering what's the best part about planting a tree?

Luis: "The digging!"

Carly: "Digging!"

Alexa: "Everyone works together, how everyone helps out, instead of just one person."

Our three new trees are Parrottia Persica trees. They are good for this area because they are drought-resistant. If you'd like to see what our trees will look like when they are more mature, just go to www.frenchgardening.com and search for Persian Parrottia. For more tips on planting your own trees and for more information on how you and your family can help with future public plantings, visit www.canopy.org. Canopy's mission is to protect and promote our urban forest. Shortly after the tree planting here, Leadership club member Erika interviewed Canopy Program Director *Sharon Kelly*.

How did you get into this kind of work?

"I always loved plants, I studied plants in college. And what I love about my job now is that I get to work with plants and people! I've been doing this job for three years. I've always loved the environment and been an environmentalist. Canopy really helps educate people about trees. I love my job!"

How was it coming to El Carmelo to help 32 kids learn how to plant a tree?

"This is one of the best groups I've every worked with! The kids were all clapping and applauding for our stake pounding! We'd like to take you guys with us everywhere!"

The El Carmelo Leadership Club generally meets once a month to plan a wide range of service learning activities. *Ellen*: "You get to do a lot of fun projects, you get to help people. I think it's really fun and a good experience."

The El Carmelo Leadership Club is open to any fourth or fifth grader; students have to commit to attending one lunch time meeting each month. "The emphasis of Leadership Club this year has been to help El Carmelo and its surrounding community. The kids have been really passionate about each of our projects," said 4th grade teacher *Kendell Smith*, who serves as club advisor, along with 3rd grade teacher *Chris Nosek*.

Our thanks to Canopy, El Carmelo Elementary School, and to both Ms. Smith and Ms. Nosek for providing our kids with such fun and meaningful learning opportunities! Contact Ms. Smith or Ms. Nosek if you'd like more information about the club.

And, remember, when you have a free moment, go check out our three beautiful new trees growing stronger and bigger every day, just like the many wonderful, young gardeners who planted them! Thank you El Carmelo Leadership Club!

ELD Potluck



What is ELD? ELD is an English Language Development program offered by the Palo Alto Unified School District to provide support for students acquiring English. This program is offered at all schools in the PAUSD (Elementary, Middle and High) and aims to help students develop the academic English skills needed to succeed in school.

At El Carmelo, our English teacher *Annette Isaacson* works with the children to provide English instruction. After she assesses the children's English level in the fall with the CELDT (California English Language Development Test), she works with the children in small groups to help them learn to speak, read, and write in English.

El Carmelo currently has 68 English learners. Annette works with the beginning through intermediate level English learners. The more advanced learners receive ELD help in their regular classroom. In addition, our school has more than 70 students who have been designated fully English proficient. We have 17 different languages spoken in our school.

Each school site with 21 or more English Learners has an English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC). This committee advises the school principal, staff and site council regarding issues related to English learning at each school. Parents of English learners and/or English only students can participate in the site ELAC.

The ELAC at El Carmelo would like to see all families of English learners fully integrated and actively involved in the school. We have such a beautiful diversity of cultures in our school, and we would like to integrate that richness!

As a first step, El Carmelo's ELAC recently held an ELD Potluck on January 9, 2010. This was a great community event with the presence of [Chinese](#), [Brazilian](#), [Latino](#), [Korean](#) and [Japanese](#) families. We had dinner, and then the kids went to the library for games and a movie, while the parents had an informal discussion with Annette and Chuck Merritt, our Principal.

During this meeting, families had the opportunity to learn about resources available to children and adults, express needs and concerns, learn how they can be involved in the school, and interact with other families of English learners. Annette and Chuck really appreciated the parents' comments.

I would like to thank the parents for coming to the Potluck and mention that the ELAC is planning another potluck for later this year. Stay tuned! I would like to see many more families joining!

If you would like more information about the ELD program, check out the PAUSD web site at <http://pausd.org/parents/programs/EnglishLanguageDevelopment/index.shtml>.

If you would like to join the ELAC at El Carmelo, please send me an e-mail.

Tais Schmitt
ELAC Member
thschmitt@pacbell.net

Thanks to all those who helped on Lego Night 2010!

The evening of Lego-building and games turned out to be an amazingly festive time. The games played included Pieces O'Brick, Duplo Drop, Lego Bingo, Plated Legos, Lego Estimating Jars, and Lego Roll. Three enormous tarps were spread on the floor of the gym to hold El Carmelo's collection of Legos, and thanks to *Denise Dauler*, we had extra Legos and Duplos to boot.

Our thanks also go to *Sandi Lewis, Silvia Morales, Serena Chandley, Andrea Jelks, Alex Kass, Greg Chandley, Sharon Johnson, and Michelle Tang* for running the games and being on hand to help out. *Chuck Merritt* delivered Certificates of Merit to children who had built a Lego creation at home and brought it to the MP room to display in our Lego Museum.

Many thanks to all who came, played, and helped us put away those thousands and thousands of bricks before going home!

Haijun Wen and Ann Holum
Lego Night Co-Chairs

Book Exchange

By *Asmita*

The Book Exchange was a huge success! We had well over a thousand books being exchanged. There were plenty of books not just for the lower grades but for the higher grades as well. I hope the students are happy with their "new" used books.

A big thank you to *Chuck Merritt* for all his support and heavy lifting, to *Jennifer* and *Ginny* for helping with all the little details, to the Leadership Club students for toting boxes to and from classrooms every day during Book Exchange week, to all the teachers for supporting this event, and to all the students in the school for participating. And, last but not least, thank you to all the volunteers who helped sort books every day of that week: *Maria Derrick (and Rebecca), Michele Kasper, Shirley Siu, Sherwin Wong, Alli Wong, Susan Rider, Susy Kim, Ken Chalmers* (for providing the boxes too!), *Adriana Reyna, Rachel Golden, Elisa Schmit* and *Stephanie Youngquist*.

A HUGE 'Thank you' to all these volunteers ...

A Huge 'thank you' to all these volunteers from the El Carmelo PTA and Community....

...Lego Night: Chair *Ann Holum* and co-Chair *Haijun Wen*, along with *Sandi Lewis, Andrea Jelks, Sylvia Morales, Greg Chandley, Serena Chandley, Sharon Johnson, Alex Kass, Denise Dauler, Chuck Merritt* and *Jennifer Fernandez*.

...Book Exchange: Chair *Asmita Runge*, our El Carmelo teachers who supported this effort to make books available to all our kids, and helpers *Maria Derrick (and Rebecca), Michele Kasper, Shirley Siu, Sherwin Wong, Alli Wong, Susan Rider, Susy Kim, Ken Chalmers* (for providing the boxes too!), *Adriana Reyna, Rachel Golden, Elisa Schmit* and *Stephanie Youngquist*.



SupportPaloAltoSchools2010.org

Our local schools in the Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) provide a world-class education to students and consistently rank among the best in the state and nation. Exceptional teachers, innovative programs, dedicated parents and the support our schools receive from our community all contribute to high levels of student achievement year in and year out.

Locally controlled parcel tax funding first approved by voters in 2001 and renewed in 2005 has helped to maintain student success and retain qualified teachers across the District. But this vital funding is set to expire unless we vote to renew it in a special mail-in ballot election this spring.

This, along with state budget cuts to education, threatens our current level of student achievement. PAUSD needs this measure to continue our local tradition of academic excellence .



Funding from the new measure will create local, stable funding that cannot be taken by the state. Help PAUSD provide students with an education that prepares them for success in the 21st century economy by voting YES.

The Parcel Tax Renewal Measure will

- ✓ Preserve excellence in core academic programs such as reading, writing, math, and science
- ✓ Minimize class size increases in all grades
- ✓ Retain qualified teachers and school employees
- ✓ Maintain training programs and activities that support high quality teaching
- ✓ Help protect critical high school course offerings and electives, including art and music

: Strong Fiscal Accountability:

- ✓ Every penny must stay in PAUSD and cannot be taken away by the State
- ✓ Expires in six years and cannot be extended without voter approval
- ✓ An Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee and mandatory annual reports ensure funds are spent wisely
- ✓ Senior citizens may file for an exemption

✂

YES! I Support Palo Alto Schools!

I would like to help the campaign:

- You may use my name publicly as a supporter
- Phone banking
- Walking my neighborhood
- Put a sign in my yard
- Donate. Enclosed is my check for \$ _____

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