



Carmeletter

Issue 10

El Carmelo PTA Newsletter

June 04, 2010

El Carmelo Calendar

Aug. 24: First Day of School

Aug. 31: Grades 1 – 5 Back-to-School Night

Date to be determined: Kindergarten Back-to-School Night

***Have a great summer!
See you on the first day of school for 2010-2011:
Tuesday, August 24th***



Principal's Letter



Dear El Carmelo families,

We are very near the end of another school year at El Carmelo. Many of the activities we are engaged in are looking forward to the next year. We recently ended STAR testing and are in the season of Student Showcases, our year-end performance assessments.

This is a good time to review some of the highlights of the school year. During the school day we saw the implementation of our new math program with its many hands-on experiences of mathematics, which have amplified the scope of mathematical thinking of students at all levels. Readers and Writers workshops in classrooms took place in order to develop readers at their individual levels and give writers a powerful voice. Peaceful Playgrounds was implemented on the playground with new games and a focus on honoring good character. All of these new initiatives took place with a great concerted effort on the part El Carmelo staff and students.

In addition to the fine work in the classrooms, there was a wonderful effort on the part of El Carmelo parent volunteers after school. The book fair, the literacy nights, Stories Under the Stars, and other programs supported the literacy curriculum of the school. The Math nights, Math Science Exploration, the new Math Olympiad club, and other programs supported the math curriculum. The school play provided a chance for many to students to act together. The Auction combined fundraising with community, and community was the sole focus of the recent International Potluck Dinner. There has been an extraordinary effort to provide quality Parent Education.

There are so many people to thank for these phenomenal efforts and for the investment of time in our school community that I don't know where to begin. I know that many of you count your closest friendships among the fellow parents that you work alongside to make these activities happen. I remember this from my own days as an elementary parent years ago (and I still am close to these dear friends though my daughter is now in college). You will know best, then, whom to thank along with our teachers for these wonderful opportunities.

These reflections encourage me as I begin preparations for the 2010-11 school year. There is much at El Carmelo for us to hold onto, as well as many opportunities to build on our strengths and to improve. Thank you to everyone who has given their time to building us up as a learning community this year.

Sincerely,
Chuck Merritt
Principal

PTA President's Letter



Dear El Carmelo Parents,

My term as PTA President is coming to an end. Thank you for the honor of serving for the past two years as PTA Vice President and PTA President. I'm proud of what our PTA Executive Board has accomplished this year in terms of streamlining the PTA, building community, and supporting the teachers and the students.

You are in good hands with a fabulous PTA Executive Board lined up for next year. If there is any message I'd like to leave you with as PTA President, it's that family engagement matters. Both in the classroom and on the PTA, engaged families make a difference. In fact, according to the National PTA Magazine *Our Children* (Feb-March 2010 issue), data shows that "regardless of family income or background, students with involved parents are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores; be promoted, pass their classes, earn credits; attend school regularly; have better social skills; show improved behavior; and adapt well to school".

If you are already involved in your child's classroom or the PTA, you know the difference it makes. If you're considering getting involved, go for it! Family-school partnerships are the fabric of a strong community.

I am grateful to all the parents who supported the PTA this year, and to those committed to supporting the PTA again next year. Thank you and have a fabulous summer.

Jennifer Mutz
El Carmelo PTA President

PTA Auction a Smashing Success!

By PTA Executive Board

This year the El Carmelo PTA Auction on Friday, March 26th, earned a Net Profit of \$40,000 for the school. The PTA is grateful for all the teachers and parents who attended the auction!!! Thanks to the guests who enjoyed this wonderful social event and bid on so many fabulous items, the PTA raised critical funds for our school. And, of course, without the generosity of many teachers and parents who contributed auction items to bid on, this fabulous event could not have happened.

The PTA is proud of its Auction Net Profit of \$40,000 (our goal this year). It is a testament to how much our teacher and parent community values its school resources to be able to meet PTA fundraising goals during these tough economic times. Particularly with impending state budget cuts that PAUSD has already determined will affect El Carmelo (see Principal *Chuck Merritt* for details), the funds PTA raises through the Auction are more important than ever. Auction earnings support many critical items our teachers need in the classroom to teach each and every child including: simple supplies like paper and pencils, computers, Math and Science curriculum supplies, school assemblies, all field trips paid for by the PTA (not PAUSD), PE and Recess equipment, Scholarship funds, and Site Improvement (like the recently constructed Resource Library in the staff lounge built to house leveled readers for all students in every grade) – just to name a few.

The Auction is El Carmelo's biggest and most important fundraiser. We are grateful for those teachers and parents and who supported this year's event by attending and contributing so much.

Thank you again for support of Auction Chair *Ana-Maria Dias* and a team of dedicated PTA Volunteers who coordinated the Auction. Because of their careful capping of Auction expenses, the PTA was able to maximize its Net Profit. It takes a committed team of coordinators, donations and attendees to make it all happen. Next year's Auction planning is already underway so we hope to see you there!

eScrip Update

Did you know that Safeway and Piazza's contributed over \$4,400 and \$2,800, respectively, to the El Carmelo PTA last year through eScrip? These contributions, in addition to other smaller donations from other local and on-line merchants, have made more than \$8,000 available to our PTA this school year to fund programs that directly benefit our children and teachers.

If you haven't signed up for eScrip yet, you're missing out on an easy, free way to make a contribution to El Carmelo. Once you sign up, whenever you shop at participating businesses using your Safeway card or your credit/debit cards, between 1% and 4% of your purchase comes back to El Carmelo. To sign up today, go to www.escrip.com, select About the Program and Sign Up. Designate El Carmelo PTA as the recipient and then register your cards.

You can also earn money for El Carmelo while you shop on-line. Hundreds of on-line retailers including Amazon and Ebay participate in eScrip. Instead of signing in to the on-line retailers website directly, do one of the following:
1) go to www.escrip.com and select Shop at the eScrip Online Mall and access your on-line retailer from there OR
2) download the free software AutoEARN from www.escrip.com. Then, every time you shop at a participating on-line merchant, a percentage of your purchase will be credited to El Carmelo.

Finally, even if you aren't an eScrip member, you can participate in the 10% Goes Back to Schools program at Safeway. Watch for specially marked products between August 11 and September 14, and then in September turn in your receipts with an eScripredemption code to help raise more money for El Carmelo.

Many thanks to the El Carmelo families who participate in eScrip, and especially to Safeway and Piazza's for their generous contributions!

Questions? Contact one of the El Carmelo eScrip coordinators:
Maria Derrick wesderrick@mindspring.com (650) 330-0598
Julia Jacobsen juliacjacobsen@gmail.com (650) 856-7935 Hope to see you there!

Save Our Crossing Guards!

Save our Palo Alto Police Department Traffic Safety Team!

On Tuesday, May 19, the City Council Finance Committee voted to recommend saving the Crossing Guards and Palo Alto Police Department (PAPD) Traffic Safety Team from being cut out of the City's budget. Principal *Chuck Merritt* and I wrote a thank you letter to the City Council as a thank you for this positive step (see below).

Parents and citizens are adamantly opposed to this proposed budget cut for the safety of our children. As such, the PTAC (PTA Council) City/School Traffic Safety Chair spearheaded an effort to make sure parents' voices were heard at the City Council Finance Committee meeting. As PTA President, I spoke to the Council Finance Committee, along with other concerned PTA members and citizens. Many parents and their children, including our very own fabulous Traffic Safety Rep (TSR) *Cynthia Tham* and her kids, attended with bike helmets in hand to make a statement. Our voices were heard!

However, keep in mind that this budget recommendation is not a done deal until City Council approves it with a final vote in June. Technically, crossing guards and our PAPD Traffic Safety Team can still be cut. If your family can spare any time to create a presence at the final City Council Budget Approval vote on June 21, I promise you will find the budget process interesting and enlightening. It affects us all – not only El Carmelo, but many of our city services may also face cuts.

In the meantime, please consider writing a personal letter to the City Council (email or hard copy is fine). The letters do make a difference: each and every letter is read by City Council and printed in hard copy for the City Council meetings. Come to the final meeting in June to make your voices heard as Palo Alto citizens and concerned parents with children who walk or bike.

Thank you all for your support to keep our children safe!

Jennifer Mutz
PTA President

May 19, 2010

Dear Honorable City Council Members,

We thank the Finance Committee for voting last night, Tuesday May 19, 2010, to save the city of Palo Alto's Crossing Guard Program and the majority (4 out of 5) of the Palo Alto Police Department's Traffic Safety Team. We hope the finance committee's recommendations carry through with an approval vote from City Council on June 21.

The proposed city budget cuts, which included eliminating all adult crossing guards city-wide and eliminating the entire PAPD Traffic Team, were of great concern to our school administration and parent community. The crossing guards and PAPD traffic teamwork together to keep the traffic on our school routes safe. Taking away any portion of this critical safety net could have seriously jeopardized the safety of our children during their commute to school.

While we understand balancing our city's budget requires tough choices, we are relieved that the Finance Committee has prioritized our children's safety above all other cost cutting measures. The crossing guards and PAPD traffic safety team are crucial to the safety of over 11,500 PAUSD children, including El Carmelo students, during peak commute hours with much higher volumes of cars on the streets than ever before (higher school enrollment, wider attendance boundaries, no school buses, incoming car commuters doubling Palo Alto's population during the day). PAUSD school administrators working in tandem with City Transportation and the PTA City/School Traffic Safety Committee are making concerted efforts to encourage more children to bike and walk to school to alleviate paralyzing and dangerous traffic around our school zones. The crossing guards and PAPD traffic safety team play a critical role in making this effort possible and successful.

Thank you for your valuable contribution to Palo Alto by voting to maintain a dedicated PAPD traffic team and crossing guards. They are both a vital benefit to traffic safety at El Carmelo Elementary School.

Sincerely,
Chuck Merritt
Principal
El Carmelo Elementary School

Jennifer Mutz
PTA President
El Carmelo Elementary School

El Carmelo Elementary School
PAUSD
3024 Bryant St.
Palo Alto, CA 94306

International Potluck Dinner

The International Potluck Dinner was a huge success with amazing performances, delicious food from all over the world, and interesting country displays!

Thanks to all the parents who volunteered for the event: *Eiko Baldwin, Minsun Cha, Chittra Chaivorapol, Tracy Chen, Vincent Chen, Eve Klein Cohen, Diana Cumagun, Audrey Finot, Maria Flores, Susan M. Gordon, Nina Hansen, Deepali Joshi, Yuhong Kong, Kaumudi, Mythily Kumar, Phuong Lam, Cecile Limbord, Rosa Montes de Oca, Aurora Morales, Hang Nguyen, Rachel Ohana, Maya Reamey, Michael and Asmita Runge, Yura Seo, Jenny Schmidt, Shaan Singh, Kori Shaw, M.K Song, Laura Tannewald, Lucie Thomas, Daehee Youn, Allison Wong, Pei Wang, and Sherwin Wong.*

Thanks for the amazing support and participation of our PTA president, Jennifer Mutz and our Principal, *Chuck Merritt.*

Thanks to the local businesses who also supported us: Indochine Restaurant, Hobe's, United Studio of Self Defense.

Blandine Chaperot-Merino & Simone Klass (co-chairs)

A BIG 'Thank you' to the volunteers for the events listed below:

... May Fete Parade: all the parents, students, teachers and Principal *Chuck Merritt* who marched with pride for El Carmelo in this annual event celebrating our city and special school.

... Student Led Showcases: all our teachers who went to great lengths helping students proudly profile examples of their work and progress for the year, and made extra time in their day to share it with parents.

... First Grade Science Olympiad: *Stephanie Youngquist* and *Linda Lee*, for spearheading the effort to pilot a Science Olympiad Program in the first grade classrooms assisted by first grade teachers, parent volunteers, and student volunteers. Parent volunteers included: *Nina Hansen, Maria Derrick, Karole Goldie, Jason Lewis, Jennifer Chu, Susie Kim, Liu Chen, Marie Decreau, Simone Klass, Julia Jacobsen, Celina Tracy, Blandine Chaperot-Merino, Davina Byrd, Jennifer Mutz, Kori Shaw, and Jenny Kuo.*

Student volunteers included: *Sarah Y. and Maya R.* for leading a station.

A big thank you to the first grade teachers who have been so supportive and generous of their time for this activity.

... International Potluck Dinner: Co-Chairs *Blandine Chaperot-Merino* and *Simone Klass*, who bravely coordinated one of El Carmelo's most successful International Potluck Dinners with Country Display Tables, a myriad of Performances, and an impressive international Feast!

Thanks to all the parents who contributed to make this event so special, so diverse and so exotic (see list above).

... Kinder Interview Support: incoming Co-Presidents *Susy Kim* and *Karole Goldie*, and incoming Vice President *Maria Derrick* for leading the PTA effort to support our Kinder Teachers during two afternoons of incoming Kinder Interviews. Parent volunteers who supported this critical effort to warmly welcome and educate new families during their first interaction with the school included: *Jeanette Cheng, Alli Wong, Christine Hodson, Carrie Leontis, Sherwin Wong and Julia Jacobsen.* A special thanks goes to *Susy Kim* for putting together an online sign-in sheet so parents could sign in on laptops and all of their information could be distributed to a spreadsheet for the Carmeletter, Kinder play-dates, Ice Cream Social and other summer e-mails.

... The Whole Year: all PTA Board Members, PTA Event Chairs, PTA Volunteers, Teachers, School Staff, and Principal *Merritt* who invested valuable time and effort to help maintain our school resources for the students, build community, and keep El Carmelo as the special place it is. We greatly appreciate all your contributions this year!