



CARMELETTER

Principal's Letter

Dear El Carmelo parents,

I want to share with you some of the reasons that we are so excited about Math at El Carmelo. The reasons stem from interest and activities by many members of our school community:

☀️ **Math Support & Extension:** This is a new program this year (see Robert Siu's article on this in the October edition of the *Carmeletter*, available online at <http://www.elcarmelo.paloaltopta.org/archives.html>). All students are tested in five domains of Math and receive support or extension based on these assessments. By the way, David Ketchum is leaving the position of Math Specialist to pursue classroom teaching, and we are excited to welcome Dori Hosobuchi, who will take over in January.

☀️ **Math Task Force:** This district committee is looking at exemplary practices in the PAUSD and beyond. El Carmelo is well represented by teacher rep Lori Beasley, parent rep Marjorie Sayer, and me as one of the co-chairs of the group.

☀️ **Math Club:** This parent-led group runs evening Math activities for interested students grades 3-5. Contact Marjorie Sayer (marjoriesayer@yahoo.com) for more information.

☀️ **Math Lab:** Stephanie Youngquist has been the coordinator of this Math supplement for a number of years. Primary classes use this extra Math as needed. Many thanks to all of the parent volunteers who make this happen.

☀️ **Math & Science Exploration:** We look forward to Ken Tracton's leadership again this year on this great El Carmelo event that brings Math and Science alive. The event is scheduled for April 29, 2012.

☀️ Even our **author-in-residence, Betsy Franco**, is well known for her contributions to

Have a great Winter Break!



Math education through her innovative Math-themed children's books (www.betsyfranco.com).

No wonder there is a buzz about Math at our school. Thank you to everyone who is contributing to Math education and enthusiasm at El Carmelo!

Wishing you a wonderful holiday season,

Chuck Merritt.



Calendar

December 19 to January 2
No School, Winter Break

Tuesday, January 3
School resumes

Wednesday, January 4
PTA Exec. Board Meeting

Thursday, January 12
LEGO Night, 6-8pm

Friday, January 13
Carmeletter published

*Most current calendar at
<http://elcarmelo.paloaltopta.org>*





PTA President's Letter

Dear El Carmelo parents and staff,

Stand outside any classroom with an open door and listen in, and you'll hear amazing things happening. Our gifted teachers weave so many of their lessons into an interdisciplinary learning tapestry where students have the chance to develop skills in one academic area, while learning about another, all while enhancing their appreciation of the arts and improving their motor skills. The activities they use to supplement their lessons make them more memorable and meaningful, and often they result in building up one or more of the 40 Developmental Assets as well.

Let me give you just one example of what I mean. The Kinders are in the midst of one of my favorite things about Kindergarten, the Farm Unit. But the Farm Unit isn't just relegated to "science" time; instead it is woven into much of what they do during this time of year. Among other things, they study different farm animals, changing the focus to a new animal every few days. Every few days my Kinder reports, with wide-eyed delight, some interesting new farm animal factlet. "Did you know - horses can see a little bit behind them? Did you know - cows have four stomachs? Did you know - sheep don't have front teeth on top?" The kids reinforce what they're learning by drawing pictures (while developing their fine motor skills), reading and listening to both fiction and non-fiction books about the animals (while developing literacy skills). They write about animals and sing songs about them.

The Farm Unit even extends to art time in my daughter's class. Each child, with one-on-one collaboration with Ms. Serena, selects a farm animal to make from household recyclables and then helps to assemble the animal. Those precious few minutes allow time for building their relationships with her and provide tangible proof that they go to school in

a caring environment. Then Ms. Serena invites her class' 5th grade buddies to come help with papier mâché. From a practical perspective, she may need the help the 5th grade buddies provide, but they do so much more than just facilitate an art project. They too are building relationships with the Kinders, functioning as a magical combination of big brother/sister, mentor, and friend, and creating that all-important caring school environment. The Kinders, of course, are helping the 5th graders develop assets of their own; they get to be admired, the leaders. Judging by the number of 5th graders who mention their Kinder buddies, or their own 5th grade buddies from when they were Kinders (or both), as highlights of their time at El Carmelo, these relationships are really important. As assets are developed, farm animals are created. Once the papier mâché has dried, the animals are painted and decorated. The results are gorgeous, and the children are justifiably proud of their work.

The week of December 5th is an exciting one in the Farm Unit. As I write this, the Kinder Farm Show, a farm-themed extravaganza where all the Kinders sing songs, tell jokes, dance, and have a great time performing for their families and friends, is rapidly approaching. Those of you who have had a Kinder at El Carmelo know exactly what I'm talking about. The excitement is palpable in the Kinder classrooms as the kids get ready for their big day; they'll perform the show once during the day for other El Carmelo students, notably those special 5th grade buddies, and then they'll do it again in the evening for their families and friends. The Farm Show is fun, but it also provides some great learning experiences for the kids. They get to work together



Above: Papier mâché pig made by a Kinder during the Farm Unit.

(continued on page 3)



PRESIDENT’S LETTER (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

as a team to accomplish something bigger than they can do on their own, they develop their gross motor skills as they learn their dances and the motions to go with the songs, they improve their music skills as they practice their songs, and some of them discover they have a knack for performing. I’d be willing to bet that more than just a handful of 5th graders who’ve been at El Carmelo for their entire elementary school career would list the Farm Show among their top five El Carmelo memories. Like the Kinder/5th grade buddies, the Farm Show is really important!

Later in the week, the Kinders take a field trip to Hidden Villa, a real working farm. The children get the chance to see the animals they’ve been learning about up close and personal. They can touch the wool of a sheep and feed a chicken. They can see how big a horse is and take a look at the skin of an actual pig which they’ve learned sunburns easily (“Did you know that, Mom? Did you?”) A perfect field trip to tie in with the curriculum.

The Kinder Team’s above-and-beyond dedication to making the farm unit so much better than just a series of dry lessons, in particular the development of the Farm Show and its continued production year after year, not only provides a wonderful learning experience for our Kinders, but also provides many happy memories for everyone who participates. And this is just one example of how the outstanding faculty and staff here at El Carmelo make their lessons come alive for their students. I challenge you to think about what goes on in classrooms at other grade levels. I bet you’ll find the same thing happens school-wide. Many thanks to our entire staff for providing that extra something special that makes an El Carmelo education exceptional.

Moo!

Maria Derrick

wesderrick@mindspring.com



HOLIDAY TOY DRIVE: MONDAY, DECEMBER 5 TO THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15



We have an opportunity to assist Palo Alto families who have little or no money for holiday gifts. From December 5 through December 15th, we are having a **toy drive** for InnVision Urban Ministry's Holiday Toy & Teen Shoppe, which invites low-income families in Palo Alto to select, wrap, and give holiday gifts to their children for free. Last year, this program provided over 1,200 toys to local children who otherwise may have gone without. Your donation can make a difference for many families this holiday season.

Bring NEW, UNWRAPPED gifts for children of ALL ages to school December 5-15.

Collection barrels will be near office and Kindergarten rooms.

Some gift ideas include the following:

- 🎁 Non-violent toys, games, art supplies, preschool toys
- 🎁 Books, stuffed animals (every child receives a book and stuffed animal with their present)
- 🎁 Gift cards (great for pre-teens and teens)

Contact **Erich Heilman** (erichheilman@gmail.com).

LEGO NIGHT - THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 6-8PM

If you and your children love Legos, then mark your calendars for **Thursday, January 12th, 6-8pm**. This family night will feature games, prizes, and building with El Carmelo’s enormous collection of Lego bricks. There will also be a one-night-only **El Carmelo Lego Museum**, which

will provide young Lego Builders with a stage to showcase a creation that has been made at home. If you would like to help, **contact Ann Holum** (650-283-2336 or holum@sbcglobal.net).



PIE DONATION DAYS ARE A SUCCESS!!!

83 families donated to PIE for the month of November, surpassing our goal of 80 families. 149 families have given to PiE this year, and we aren't going to stop until we reach at least 200 El Carmelo families!

Donating to PiE is critical now more than ever. With state budget cuts looming, your donations to PiE will support **classroom aides and science and arts instruction.**

It's not too late to donate!!! Our campaign ends January 27th. Drop off a check in the Office or go to www.papie.org.

Contact **Alli Wong** (allison_wong17@yahoo.com), **Faiza Zarroug** (fazarroug@gmail.com), **Kaumudi Bhawe** (kaumudib@gmail.com), or **Susy Kim** (susykim@gmail.com).



EL CARMELO'S 35TH ANNUAL AUCTION: "WILD, WILD WEST"



AUCTION DONATIONS DUE JANUARY 27!!!

It's time to start thinking about the upcoming auction! Auction donation forms have been sent home in your Friday Folders and are also available in the Office.

We need your donations! Get creative! Ask around for

ideas. Look through old catalogs. Here are some ideas:

- adult parties
- kids parties
- getaways
- vacation homes
- spa days
- gift cards
- gift baskets
- homemade dinners and/or baked goods
- sports memorabilia and/or tickets.



Your donations are what make our Auction a success!

Contact **Amy Love** (aloveinchile@yahoo.com).

Save the Date!!!
**WILD, WILD,
WEST AUCTION**
Saturday, March 10, 2012

HOLIDAY SHOPPING ONLINE MEANS \$\$\$ FOREL CARMELO!

Did you know that a percentage of many of your online purchases can be donated to El Carmelo with just the click of the mouse?

All you need to do is enter your online retailers' websites through the (1) **Amazon link** or (2) **eScrip Online Mall link** available at both the El Carmelo school website (<http://elcarmelo.pausd.org/>) and El Carmelo PTA website (<http://www.elcarmelo.paloaltopta.org/>). *Once you've reached the retailer's website through the special link, shop just like you always do.*



Amazon will donate 4-15% of your purchase price to El Carmelo when you get to the Amazon website through the link. We suggest that you bookmark the El Carmelo-Amazon School Rewards link (<http://www.amazon.com/?encoding=UTF8&tag=elcar-20>) so that you can easily go to the website.

For questions on Amazon School Rewards, contact **Jeanette Cheng** (chencer@gmail.com).



Retailers on the **eScrip Online Mall** donate varying percentages (usually between 1% and 5%). You do NOT need to be signed up for eScrip to benefit El Carmelo through the Online Mall.

For questions on eScrip Online Mall, contact **Christine Hodson** (chodson@sawyertrail.com) or **Hagit Katzenelson** (hagitkatz@gmail.com).



People

of El Carmelo

Meet Custodian Jerry Phok

JERRY PHOK



Above: Jerry Phok

We see Custodian Jerry Phok working hard around campus Monday through Friday -- always with a **big, friendly smile**. As kids, staff, and parents attest, he is a fun, important part of the El Carmelo community. Let's learn more about him.

Childhood

Jerry Phok (21 years old) was born and raised in San Jose. His parents, both immigrants from Cambodia, worked long hours and were often not home, so Jerry and his older brother spent a lot of their childhood on their own. Jerry admits that due to the lack of adult supervision while growing up, he did not focus on studying as much as he would have liked.

El Carmelo

After high school, Jerry attended Evergreen Valley College. After one year there, **his uncle, who worked as a Custodian**

for PAUSD for 26 years, "recruited" Jerry to apply for a Custodian position at PAUSD. After three months, PAUSD called Jerry in for an interview. He was immediately hired and got trained the next day.

Jerry has worked as a substitute Custodian at Duveneck, Addison, JLS, Escondido, Gunn, and Palo Alto High School before coming to El Carmelo. While subbing at El Carmelo, Chuck told Jerry that the Custodian position at El Carmelo would soon be open and encouraged Jerry to apply. *The rest is history... :)*

Family

Jerry lives in San Jose with his mother, stepfather, older brother, and two school-age half-brothers.

Hobbies

After work, you will find Jerry **at the gym** doing cardio and lifting weights with a good friend. He enjoys playing **Air Hockey** at Dave & Busters, **golfing**, and attending **lights & music shows**.

As a child, Jerry became experienced in **raising Australian**



Above: Arowana (or dragon fish)

Arowana fish, also known as "dragon fish." Arowana are carnivorous freshwater fish that grow up to 2 to 3 feet in length.



Above: Angkor Wat in Cambodia

Arowana fish eat live foods, such as mealworms, crickets, feeder fish, and even small crawfish. Some day, when he has more time, he would like to have one again as a pet.

This May, Jerry will travel to Cambodia for the first time. He is most excited to visit **Angkor Wat**, a temple built for a king in the early 12th century.

Working at El Carmelo

What I Like:

- people, staff, environment
- A small school is easy to maintain.
- There are a lot of activities and events that are pretty fun. For example, I'm looking forward to the [Kinder] Farm Show!

What I Dislike:

Everything has been good so far at El Carmelo!!!



**NOVEMBER'S DEVELOPMENTAL ASSET OF THE MONTH:
POSITIVE CULTURAL IDENTITY**



Young people feel comfortable with and proud of their identity, including but not limited to disabilities, ethnicity, faith/religion, family status, gender, language, and sexual orientation.

The Importance of Positive Cultural Identity

The way that youth are treated with regard to their ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or gender directly affects their ability to develop a positive personal identity. As adults, it's critical that we model recognition, understanding, and celebration of all cultural identities, including the cultures to which we and/or our children do not belong.

Sharing and celebrating different cultural identities increases individuals' self-esteem and promotes cultural competence among all young people. This is why Santa Clara County adopted the 41st developmental asset – positive cultural identity.

Building a positive cultural identity and respect for other differences starts early. After age nine, racial attitudes tend to stay the same unless a child has a life-changing experience. Before that, however, we have a good chance to help children develop positive feelings about their racial and cultural identity. Many of us think that because our kids are raised in a diverse community, they will be tolerant and color blind. Research by Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman shows us that children need to be taught about racial and cultural differences. We

need to be able to talk about the differences that kids see and why these differences don't create barriers to acceptance.

Children should be taught about the differences among us, whether they are due to disabilities, ethnicity, faith/religion, family status, gender, language or sexual orientation. Children should be encouraged to accept and celebrate these differences. We want to help all children develop a positive self-concept and feel proud of who they are, but also to recognize that they are not superior to other groups. If this positive sense of self and others is allowed to flourish, today's children will become adults who accept and affirm differences, identify unfair situations, and strive to eliminate racism of any sort. Bullying will decrease, since many acts of bullying occur when children identify someone as different and are afraid of, or don't understand, those differences. Palo Alto's exceptionally diverse community can only benefit from building greater esteem and understanding both within and among the many cultural groups in our region.

The following discussion topics can help families talk with young people about their cultural identity:

- What is our cultural background?
- What is something that you value because it's valued by our culture?
- What are some things about our culture that you would like other people to know?
- Do you know anyone who's from a different culture? In what ways are your cultures similar and different? Do your cultural differences make it difficult to be friends? How can you share your cultural differences in a positive, nonjudgmental way?

--Project Cornerstone

www.projectcornerstone.org

**DECEMBER'S DEVELOPMENTAL ASSET OF THE MONTH:
THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY SUPPORT**



Family support refers to the ways that parents, siblings, and extended family show love, encouragement, and comfort to each other. The Developmental Asset survey of Palo Alto youth in 2010 reveals that while younger youth generally experience family support, teenagers do so much less often: 89% of our 5th graders reported family support, 84% of our 7th graders, but only 66% of

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THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY SUPPORT (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

our high school students reported the asset. So, why the big drop off? Some of it is developmental. In achieving independence, kids don't think they need the support from parents as much as from friends and push us away. It also may be that they don't understand the ways in which we offer love and support.

Clay Roberts recently came and spoke to Palo Alto community members, middle school teachers and parents about the Developmental Assets and how we can build them in our youth. He spoke about the importance of "love languages." To illustrate the point, he used the story of the husband who gives his wife an appliance for her birthday. She was expecting jewelry. In the husband's language, the appliance was a great idea because he knew she loved to cook. In her language, well, you can just imagine what she thought! Robert's point was we need to know how our partners and children interpret our love language. While we may think we are communicating support to our family members, it doesn't hurt to once in a while check to see that they are actually feeling it!

Support can be shown in many ways. When you hug or kiss your child and say "I love you," the support is pretty obvious. Less obvious ways of showing support include just paying attention to them, listening to them and taking an interest in what they are doing. Our teens are striving to develop independence from us. It is hard for parents to not be able to interact in the same ways with them. Teens often want to just talk and have you listen, without giving any feedback or advice. It allows them to work through the situation on their own.

In their book *Parenting Teens with Love and Logic*, Foster Cline, MD, and Jim Fay discuss the transition from parenting younger children—who typically require guidance and firm limits—to parenting adolescents, who benefit most from the freedom to make their own decisions within the boundaries of safe, reasonable limits. According to Cline and Fay, effective parenting in the teenage years requires clearly communicating expectations and consequences while allowing youth to make their own decisions and "own" the results, even if

their choices are not the ones that we would have preferred.

One of the most important things to realize about providing family support to older children is that they need the love and support every bit as much as younger children do, even if they claim that they don't. Although it can be challenging to remain connected to preteens and teenagers, the benefits of doing so are immense.

The activities below offer a starting point to help build and strengthen family support.

- Make family rules together and agree on rewards and consequences.
- Try to eat at least one meal together every day, and set aside at least one evening or weekend day for the family to spend together in a pastime that everyone enjoys or finds valuable. Make the effort to maintain these traditions and rituals even if your children complain about them when they're older.
- Be sure to recognize your children's unique talents and encourage their interests, even when they don't match yours. For example, if they're interested in animation, check to see if there's a convention or film festival in your region that you can attend together.
- Look your children in the eyes when you talk to them, and give them all of your attention in conversation.
- Be empathetic about their struggles and concerns—no matter how silly or trivial their problems seem to you; they are significant to your children.
- Praise your children for doing a good job and point out when they're being helpful.
- At least once a day, try to express that you appreciate and care about your children.
- Be affectionate, but respect their space; older children especially may be uncomfortable about displays of affection in front of non-family members.

--Project Cornerstone

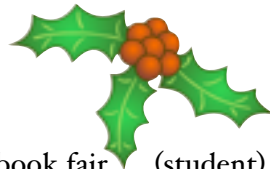
www.projectcornerstone.org





In Appreciation

Many thanks to the El Carmelo community...



Directory: *Ram Ramkumar* who once again heroically put together the fabulously useful El Carmelo Directory, *Kshama Jirage* who helped tie up loose ends to make the Directory as accurate and up-to-date as possible, *Tais Schmitt*, who helped with proofreading, and *Christine Hodson*, who helped with distribution (along with PTA Membership cards).

Innisbrook Fall Fundraiser: VP of Fundraising *Nancy Bain*, who managed our entire successful Fall fundraiser from publicity to product distribution; assisted by cheerful, helpful *Doreen Rebbock*.

Hearing Screening: *Gretchen Aberg, Anna Carl, Rachel Cooley, Yosbie Roake* for spending a morning making sure kids got from classrooms to the MP Room, onto the Hearing Screening bus and back again.

Vision Screening: *Gretchen Aberg, Carlee Lopez, Kori Shaw, Jessica Yang* who helped make sure the screening ran smoothly and on schedule.

Ice Skating Party: *Julie Bitler* and *Doreen Rebbock* for organizing a splendid evening of skating for El Carmelo families at Winter Lodge, and *Lucinda Brommersma, Anna Carl, Chitra Chaivorapol, Grit Denker, Maria Derrick, Hagit Katzenelson, Erika Krugler, Madison* (student) for their help in making it happen. A special thank you to the families who brought delicious desserts to share!

Scholastic Book Fair: *Kate Karagueuzian Gibbons* for

chairing this successful book fair. Thanks to *Maria Derrick, Julia Jacobsen, Sripriya Kannan, Kathleen Ford, Elisa Schmit, Sharon Tobias, Erina Dubois, Jen Wiener, Gwen Fischer, Kathy Podoll, Qian Anson, Shannon Silva, Andrea Christensen, Tzielan Lee, Jeanette Cheng, Mona Napaa, Hagit Katzenelson, Jayne Pearce, Marni Novick, Kathryn Lamis, Sherwin Wong, Blandine Chaperot-Merino, Krissy Green, Maya Venkatraman, Dana Roman, Christine Hodson, Marjorie Sayer*, and *Tais Schmit* for their support, advice, time, muscle, and unwaning enthusiasm. A special thank you to *Leslie Bell, John Walton, Megan Fisher, and Laurel Fisher* for delighting the kids with stories during our evening event; and a big thanks also to *Chuck Merritt, Jennifer Fernandez, Ginny Nagao, and Jerry Phok* for cheerful support before, during, and after the fair.

Game Night: *Stephanie Youngquist* for organizing and hosting an action-packed evening of game playing in the MP Room, along with Game Gurus *Sherwin Wong, Maya Venkatraman, Tais Schmitt, Marjorie Sayer, Yosbie Roake, Jayne Pearce, Hagit Katzenelson, Kate Karagueuzian, Gibbons, Erina Dubois, Maria Derrick, and Grit Denker*.

PiE Donation Days: *Alli Wong, Susy Kim, Faiza Zarroug, Kaumudi Bhawe*, El Carmelo's intrepid PiE reps, along with their steadfast sous chefs: *Heather Williamson, Tais Schmitt, Doreen Rebbock, Leslyn Leong, Susy Kim, Karole Goldie, Maria Derrick, Blandine Chaperot-Merino, Lucinda Brommersma, and Marion*

(student). Thanks, too, to *Laura Schneider* and *Stephanie Youngquist* for loaning their waffle irons.

Submissions for next Carmeletter due Thursday, 1/5/12

Email editable document to carmeletter@paloaltopta.org.

For more info, see the El Carmelo PTA website (www.elcarmelo.paloaltopta.org/carmeletter.html).

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