



# CARMELETTER

## Principal's Letter

Dear El Carmelo parents,



The thought of homework brings to my mind many different scenes: children reading with their parents, students practicing skills they learned about in the classroom, kids growing in their confidence as they learn how to manage multistage projects. I also

remember the challenges of helping my daughter with her homework when she was in elementary school; one of the biggest was to figure out how to encourage her when she was worried that she couldn't do something as well as she thought she should. That situation was sometimes very hard and required a lot of thinking on my part and on hers.

It seems very appropriate to me that this month the PAUSD is initiating a conversation around homework at all 17 of our schools. Everyone involved has a lot invested in the topic, each with important perspectives. Staffs, Site Councils, and PTAs will each have a chance to consider several key questions: (a) What is the purpose of homework?, (b) What does effective homework look like?, (c) What does ineffective homework look like?

The El Carmelo PTA will host a **homework discussion** for all attendees on **Tuesday, February 7th**, the next PTA General Meeting. The homework discussion will allow each participant the chance to express their own thoughts on the questions above at the meeting. The individual ideas will be filtered through a small group to refine the ideas down to the common ideas, avoiding repetition. Then, each small group will have the chance to report out their collective ideas. When these are shared with the group as a whole and the duplicate ideas are combined, then each participant gets one more chance to indicate which ideas are most important to them.

The entire exercise should last about 40 minutes. I like that the process ensures that individuals are heard but also that there is a concise and easily understood product. *All of the materials produced at each event will be returned to the PAUSD office, where the input will be compiled and then eventually used to help in the formulation of school district homework policy.*

I hope that you will attend the PTA General Meeting on February 7 at 7pm in the MP room. There will be a brief business meeting and then this participant-friendly homework discussion. See you there!

-Chuck Merritt



### Calendar

**Saturday, January 14**  
Stanford Basketball Fundraiser, 1pm

**Monday, January 16**  
No School, Martin Luther King Day

**Friday, January 20**  
No School, Local Holiday

**Monday to Friday, January 23-27**  
Book Exchange

**Tuesday, January 24**  
Family Restaurant Night



**Wednesday, January 25**  
Coffee with the Principal, 8:25am

**Friday, January 27**  
*PiE donation deadline!*  
El Carmelo Hoedown, 7-9pm



**Wednesday, February 1**  
PTA Exec. Board Meeting, 8:30am

**Thursday, February 2**  
Bingo Night, 6-8pm



**Tuesday, February 7**  
PTA General Meeting, 7-8pm

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



# PTA President's Letter

*Dear El Carmelo parents and staff,*

Before my kids were in school, we used to walk by El Carmelo at least once a week between 10:00 and 10:15. Some days I chose this time because that's what worked for getting us where we needed to be when we needed to be there. But I think I subconsciously chose the timing on other days specifically so I could hear the sounds of recess. The joyfulness of children playing always warms my heart.

Recess is more than fun. While it's easy to see that recess provides an opportunity for our children to refresh, to talk and play with friends (and make new friends), and to release energy (work out the wiggles), it provides much more.

Kids develop motor skills and get some all-important physical exercise, and develop social skills as they interact with each other while playing organized sports and games. They learn to cooperate and take turns, show respect and care for one another, and to negotiate and resolve disputes. Sure, there are some bumps along the way, just as there is with the learning of everything else, but they make huge strides as the year progresses. During recess, our kids are building up their developmental assets, too. For example, they further their relationships with non-parent adults (the teachers and yard duty staff who make sure they stay safe and happy) and they get to see parents who support the school and their community, since much of the yard duty staff, especially at lunch time, is made up of moms and dads, something I think is pretty cool. They experience "School Boundaries" – there are rules that must be followed and consequences for those who don't follow them. And there are adult role models – the dads who come to help with sports activities come to mind.

Recess provides our children with the chance to participate in any number activities, some structured and some completely freeform. The play structures are always popular, and the fields and



blacktop are always full of kids playing tetherball, wall ball, kickball, foursquare, soccer...

There are literally dozens of balls of all types, jump ropes, hula hoops, whiffle ball bats/balls, scoops, frisbees, etc. made available in large quantities as part of the Peaceful Playgrounds program which enables everyone who wants to use a piece of equipment to have one. The Reading Garden is always available for children who want to enjoy a little bit of nature, and the Library is

open regularly for children who enjoy quieter activities. The Game Cart rolls out regularly so children can engage in a friendly game of Candyland or Battleship. The increasingly popular Ten Mile Club happens once a week at lunch recess; children run around the playground and earn prizes when they reach various milestones (pun intended). Noon Art provides our students a chance

to learn a technique and create a fun art project. The gigantic LEGO bins come out regularly. It looks like so much fun that I want to come play too! OK – I probably won't do that, but I'll definitely enjoy the sounds of children playing and having a good time with each other when I walk or bike past El Carmelo during recess. I hope you like the din of recess as much as I do!

Recess makes me proud. Proud that El Carmelo parents, working through the PTA, help to make so many recess opportunities possible by providing the generous volunteers who staff some of the activities and funding for playground equipment, games for the game cart, prizes for Ten Mile Club, Noon Art supplies... Thank you!

*Happy New Year!*

*Maria Derrick*

[wesderrick@mindspring.com](mailto:wesderrick@mindspring.com)





# People

## of El Carmelo

Meet Librarian Leslie Bell



### LESLIE BELL

The El Carmelo Library sometimes has a “**Library Full**” sign at the door at recess. Who is the person in charge of this popular hangout at El Carmelo?

#### CHILDHOOD

Leslie Bell was born in Redwood City and grew up in Menlo Park. She went to Woodside High School. She has lived in the Peninsula area all of her life.

#### EDUCATION & PRIOR CAREER

Leslie wanted to be a teacher since she was a child.

She went to college at Chico State for two years and then transferred to the University of the Pacific, majoring in Multiple Studies, a pre-teaching degree.

After, she earned a **Master in Special Education at San Francisco State, specializing in the Hearing Impaired.**

Leslie then worked as a **Special Education teacher** for preschoolers and Kinders. She focused on hearing impaired students.

#### FINDING EL CARMELO

Leslie took a couple years off to take care of her son Ryan. She

returned to teaching part-time in San Jose. Commuting with a young child was not easy, so she looked for a job close to home.

The PAUSD had a School Librarian position open at El Carmelo.

Whenever Leslie visited a library, she imagined how fun it would be to be a Children’s Librarian. She loves children’s literature. (In fact, she has a big collection of children’s literature at home!) She applied and, with the promise to earn a Library credential in the next few years, she got the job. She eventually earned a **Master of Library and Information Science at San Jose State.** School librarians in the PAUSD must have **both a teaching credential and a library credential.** *The rest is history...*

#### FAMILY

**Leslie lives in Palo Alto with her husband Gordon,** who works for the City of San Carlos. Leslie met Gordon when she was trying out a meditation class given by San Carlos’ Recreation Department, and he was nearby running the San Carlos adult softball league.

Leslie has a **twenty year-old son Ryan,** a sophomore who is studying film and music at the California Institute of the Arts. She also has **one stepson, two stepdaughters, five step-grandchildren and one step-great-grandchild.**

Leslie has **three dogs:** two four year-old Schnauzers, **Marley** and **Hermione,** who were brought over as puppies from Maui after a vacation there, and an eight year-old wirehaired Dachshund, **Milo.**



*Left to right: Marley, Milo, Hermione*

#### HOBBIES

Leslie adores **children’s literature and adult nonfiction** (biographies, health books, cookbooks) and **reviewing books** in local bookstores and on various websites.

Leslie has many more hobbies.

Leslie enjoys **walking,** especially with her dogs.

Leslie is passionate about **traveling,** thanks to her adventurous parents. Her favorite destination so far has been Greece due to its ambiance and food.

Leslie goes to the **movies** almost every weekend and loves watching **musicals,** especially Chorus Line and Wicked.

She loves to **cook.** At one point in her life, she dreamed of opening up a restaurant specializing in healthy, homestyle food.

Most recently, she has learned how to make **glass artwork.**

### Working at El Carmelo

#### What I Like:

**Being around the kids.**  
“I like being around people.”

#### What I Dislike:

**Getting up early.**  
“I’m just not a morning person.”  
“If the job started at 10, this would be the perfect job for me.”





### STANFORD BASKETBALL - SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 1PM

Join El Carmelo families and cheer on the Stanford men's basketball team as they take on the Colorado Buffaloes on **Saturday, January 14, 1pm**. Tickets are limited. \$20 per ticket (reserved seats, \$30 face value). To order, email Kori Shaw ([korivan@gmail.com](mailto:korivan@gmail.com)). **\$5 of every ticket purchased through El Carmelo will be donated to the El Carmelo PTA.**



### EL CARMELO'S ANNUAL BOOK EXCHANGE - COMING SOON!



The annual El Carmelo Book Exchange is just around the corner. It is a fun and easy way for your kids to trade in old books for new-to-you books.

*All students are encouraged to bring*

*gently used books at any reading level to their classrooms January 23 - 26 (Monday - Thursday).* The books will be collected by 4th and 5th graders in the Leadership Team and sorted by parent volunteers. On Friday, January 27, a box of age-appropriate books will be delivered to each classroom, and children will be able to

choose new-to-you books to take home. Children will be able to choose one book for each book they bring in, up to five. And all students, even those who don't bring books to exchange, will be able to choose at least one book.

Please take time to look through your family's collection of children's books to see if there are any you are ready to trade. ALL donations are welcome, but those that are appropriate for 4th and 5th graders are especially needed. Books remaining after the Book Exchange will be donated.

If you are interested in volunteering to sort books, or if you have questions, please contact Maria Derrick at [wesderrick@mindspring.com](mailto:wesderrick@mindspring.com). Happy reading!

### FAMILY RESTAURANT NIGHT AT CHEVY'S - TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2012

Thank you to everyone who participated in Family Restaurant Nights at Fresh Choice and Pizza My Heart in 2011! These two fun, easy fundraisers have earned over \$672!

*DINE IN or TAKE OUT* at **Chevy's** (2116 W. El Camino Real, Mountain View) on Tuesday, January 24, 11am-10pm. **25% of the proceeds will be donated to the El Carmelo PTA.** *Bring the flyer* (in next week's Friday folder or available at <http://tinyurl.com/72vj6n>).



### BINGO NIGHT - THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 6-8PM (MP ROOM)



Kids LOVE playing Bingo (and parents do, too!). The excitement is contagious as the kids hear their Bingo numbers called. Bingo is a classic, fun-filled family game that is perfect for school-aged kids. Come and join the fun at El Carmelo's Annual Bingo Night.



*The cost is \$1 per Bingo card. Pizza will also be available to purchase.*

If you have any questions or would like to volunteer for the event, contact Sarah Newman at [sarahnewman@comcast.net](mailto:sarahnewman@comcast.net) or Christine Hodson at [chodson@sawyertrail.com](mailto:chodson@sawyertrail.com).

### "YOU CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE" CHALLENGE GRANT

#### LAST CHANCE TO DONATE TO PiE!!!

A generous donor offered a **\$50,000 Challenge Grant** if we can get 300 families who have not yet donated to PiE to make their donation by **January 27th**. Help us secure this incredible offer by donating today at: [www.papie.org/donate](http://www.papie.org/donate), leave a check in your school office, or mail to: PiE, P.O. Box 1557, Palo Alto, CA 94302.

Questions? Contact PiE Executive Director Kathy Schroeder at: [kschroeder@papie.org](mailto:kschroeder@papie.org) or 650-329-3990.

***Thank you for supporting El Carmelo's Teachers' Aides and arts and science instruction!***





# El Carmelo 35th Auction March 10, 2012 **Wild, Wild West**



Donated items and services are due January 27.

Info: Amy Love  
aloveinchile@yahoo.com  
650.862.2801

## THE EL CARMELO HOEDOWN - FRIDAY, JANUARY 27, 7-9PM (MP ROOM)



Come dressed for the WILD WILD WEST and get pictures taken with your friends and family. Enjoy line dancing and possibly learning a few new moves. Light refreshments.

*All are welcome.* Suggested \$5 donation per family. All proceeds go directly to the El Carmelo PTA. **Friday, January 27, 7-9pm in the MP Room.** Contact Amy Love ([aloveinchile@yahoo.com](mailto:aloveinchile@yahoo.com)).



### GENERAL PTA MEETING, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 7-8PM

Calling all PTA members! Our February general membership meeting will be held on **Tuesday, February 7th, 7pm** (note change of date) in the MP Room. We will be electing a Nominating Committee who will be responsible for identifying candidates for the PTA Board, as well as chairs for all PTA activities. In addition, the PTA Board will recommend a couple of small changes to the budget, and that the PTA donate up to \$10,000 (from our reserve funds) to pay for the demolition of the increasingly problematic storage cabinets next to Room 1 and the purchase of new cabinets for Kinder PE equipment in the Room 1 garden area. Following our business meeting, stay for a **discussion of homework** (see Principal's Letter on page 1 of this *Carmeletter*). Please join us!



### JANUARY'S DEVELOPMENTAL ASSET OF THE MONTH:

#### ADULT ROLE MODELS

When we reflect back on the experiences that shaped us when we were young, we often remember a special adult in our lives. It might have been a teacher, coach, older relative, community member, or other caring adult that made a big impact on us. We see these role models as being important in

shaping our lives. And that's no surprise - research shows that positive adult role models have a tremendous impact on young people and can have the following benefits:

- Higher levels of self esteem

*(continued on page 6)*



## JANUARY'S DEVELOPMENTAL ASSET OF THE MONTH: ADULT ROLE MODELS - (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

- Reduced use of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and hard drugs

- Improved high school graduation rates

- Greater aspirations for their careers

Palo Alto's youth could use more Adult Role Models. In the Developmental Assets 2010 survey, only 51% of 5th graders and 48% of 7th graders and 33% of 9th-12th graders reported the presence of positive adult role models in their lives.

Peter C. Scales, a Search Institute author and researcher has identified the #1 needs of kids between 10 and 15 years old as positive social interactions with adults. Establishing these relationships early in your child's life will help them during the difficult teen years. There are many ways that you can be an adult role model for your child and by extension to their friends.

- ☑ Treat them with love and respect.

- ☑ Model appropriate behavior. Your children are watching. If you bend the rules, then it's okay for them to bend them.

- ☑ When you make mistakes, admit them and apologize when you fail them.

- ☑ Avoid making negative comments about others.

- ☑ Spend time with them. Be involved in their lives on a daily basis.

A positive role model doesn't have to have any special skills. You don't have to be a sports hero or a billionaire for youth to look up to you. In fact, most youth who said that they had role models identified them as caring friends and relatives. Every single one of us has the potential to make a difference in the lives of young people. All that matters is being willing to take the time to get to know a young person and let them get to know you, and to share your experience and knowledge.



Our challenge to you is to think about for whom you are a role model and how can you increase that number!

The following discussion topics can help young people recognize the role models that influence their lives:

- What's the difference between a hero and a role model?

- Are celebrities like sports stars, actors, and musicians good role models? Why or why not?

- Which adults whom you know do you admire? Why?

- What have you learned from adults that has helped or inspired you?

- What would you like to be able to talk about more with adults?

This article was adapted from the Project Cornerstone's Asset of the Month program.

--Project Cornerstone

[www.projectcornerstone.org](http://www.projectcornerstone.org)

## In Appreciation

*Many thanks to the El Carmelo community...*

*Tzielan Lee*, Chair, for spearheading the **See's Candy Fundraiser** and making sure no El Carmelo family had to go without chocolate over the Winter Holiday! Thanks also to *Nancy Bain* for her support.

*Erich Heilman* for coordinating the **Holiday Toy Drive** that benefited the InnVision Urban Ministry's Holiday Toy & Teen Shoppe.

*All El Carmelo parents who so selflessly offered their resources, time, and energy to the PTA during 2011.* Thanks to you, the PTA has been able to support our children and teachers as they learn and teach, and to provide many fun community-wide activities for all to enjoy.

**Do you receive the El Carmelo PTA's weekly eNews?**

If not, email Jen Wiener at [jenwiener@gmail.com](mailto:jenwiener@gmail.com).

**Submissions for next Carmeletter due**

**Thursday, 2/2/12**

Email editable document to [carmeletter@paloaltopta.org](mailto:carmeletter@paloaltopta.org).

For more info, see the El Carmelo PTA website

([www.elcarmelo.paloaltopta.org/carmeletter.html](http://www.elcarmelo.paloaltopta.org/carmeletter.html)).

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