



# CARMELETTER

## Principal's Letter

Dear El Carmelo parents,



exchange included a three-week visit that I was able to make to public schools in Nayarit, Mexico, hosted by Rafa's college. I was very interested to see the wide variety of education models in the small community of Santiago Ixcuintla, Mexico.

Rafael is not only a college administrator but is also part of a team that is designing a bi-lingual (Spanish-English) elementary school for the capital of Nayarit, Tepic. This project has informed many of the questions that he brought to our school and has benefited from many lessons observed and from many conversations with students and parents.

We are grateful to the Fulbright organization and to COMEXUS for this opportunity to share our educational community with Rafael and his with me. Many thanks to all of you that were able to meet and talk with our guest! (Special thanks to the Barbera family for spending the day with Rafa showing off our natural treasures in Palo Alto).

--Chuck Merritt.

Rafael and I were put together by the Fulbright Garcia-Robles fellowship, administered by COMEXUS, the Commission between Mexico and the US for culture and education. This

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



### Calendar



**Friday, November 4**  
Ice Skating Party,  
5:30-7:30

**Sunday, November 6**  
Daylight Savings ends

**Monday, November 7**  
Kinder Extended Day Begins

**Monday, November 7  
to Thursday, November 10**  
*Scholastic Book Fair*

**Tuesday, November 8**  
*Stories with Milk & Cookies,*  
6:30-8pm

**Friday, November 11**  
No School, Veterans' Day

**Tuesday, November 15**  
Vision Screening  
*Family Game Night, 6-8pm*

**Wednesday, November 16  
to Friday, November 18**  
PiE Donation Days

**Wednesday, November 23  
to Friday, November 25**  
No School, Thanksgiving

**Wednesday, November 30**  
Coffee with Principal, 8:25am

**Thursday, December 1**  
*Carmeletter* submissions due

**Tuesday, December 6**  
*Family Restaurant Night at  
Pizza My Heart, 4-10pm*



**Wednesday, December 7**



# PTA President's Letter

Dear El Carmelo parents and staff,

El Carmelo's 2011-2012 school play, *The Reluctant Dragon*, has just finished its three-show run. It was a thrill to see how wonderfully the show came together after six weeks of hard work by almost 60 (!!!) El Carmelo students (with help from



Director ej Taylor and her team from the Palo Alto Children's Theatre and our parent producers Erina DuBois and Erin Duran and their team of parent volunteers!). Our children put on an enjoyable show for sure, but it was also exciting to see how the process of

preparing for and performing the show strengthened the El Carmelo community and provided the participating children with building blocks for healthy development (Developmental Assets).

*How did The Reluctant Dragon strengthen our community?* Nearly one-third of the 3rd/4th/5th graders participated. They had the opportunity to meet and work with kids in other grades. Some of those new friendships will blossom for years. In addition, the many parent volunteers who helped with various behind-the-scenes activities like rehearsal/performance supervision, ticket sales, poster hanging, etc., also got to know each other and the children better. We built new relationships among children, among parents, and among generations. It doesn't get any better than that!

*How did The Reluctant Dragon help foster healthy development of our kids?* By providing many of the Developmental Assets identified by the Search Institute as important for optimal outcomes, that's how! I would argue that well over half of the Assets were enhanced by the school play experience. More information about the Developmental Assets is available in the October *Carmeletter*; I invite you to review the article and see for yourself, but here are a just a few observations:

● **The folks from the Children's Theatre provided great role models for our kids and genuinely connected with many of them.** Kids sought out ej (the Director) after the show to have their picture taken with her; both kids and ej looked truly delighted to

be together. My own daughter insisted on going into the MP Room to say "good-bye" to her as we left after the cast party. While we were there, another family came in to say "good-bye" and "thank you," too.



● **The kids had ownership of the show; ej provided direction, but the show was the kids' show.** The kids were ultimately responsible for many aspects of the show (apart from learning what to say, when to say, and where to be). They took care of their costumes and props, as well as running the lights/sound/curtain/etc. ej talked with the cast early on about the play, listened to their ideas about the direction the show should take and actually used many of their ideas. Kids were empowered having control over their show.

● **The kids learned to work together.** What better way to develop social competencies than to throw 60-some people together for a couple hours every afternoon with a big project to complete that requires that everyone work together to accomplish a goal that no one can reach on his/her own. Kids got to practice interpersonal skills every day, and many of them got to work a little bit on conflict resolution as well. They also had hands-on lessons in how to be caring and supportive of one another.

● **The kids strengthened their sense of positive identity by successfully staging their show.** What better way to develop self-esteem and confidence than to put together a show for all the world to see and do a great job?

Certainly there are many other activities that help build community and nurture Developmental Assets (other arts activities and sports come immediately to mind). But El Carmelo has just benefited from a unique opportunity available here in Palo Alto, our six-week visit from the Children's Theatre. Many thanks to them – and to all the kids who participated. *Brava!*

-*Maria Derrick* ([wesderrick@mindspring.com](mailto:wesderrick@mindspring.com))



# People of El Carmelo

Meet Secretary Jennifer Fernandez

## JENNIFER FERNANDEZ



*Above: Jennifer Fernandez (right) with daughter Victoria (left) at Cal football game.*

### Childhood

Jennifer Fernandez (“Jen”) is a **native Palo Alto**. She went to Crescent Park Elementary School, Jordan Middle School, and Palo Alto High School. Her dad was a high school English teacher at Cubberley High School and Palo Alto High School and a principal at Gunn High School.

### Education

After a gap year, which gave her the opportunity to explore Europe, Jen went to the University of Redlands and **double-majored in Art History and German**. Then, she earned a **Master of Science in Arts Administration** from Drexel.

### Career

After graduate school, Jen became a **Fellow at the National Endowment for the Arts** in Washington, DC. She then accepted a job at the Palm Springs Desert Museum to be near her now-husband **Julian**, who was working as a tennis pro in a resort in the Palm Springs area. **She met Julian in college one month before graduating.**

### El Carmelo

After Julian went to business school in Texas, the two moved to Palo Alto *across the street from El*

*Carmelo!!!* Their oldest daughter Victoria went to El Carmelo from K to 3rd grade, when the family moved to West Menlo Park.

Jen’s dad was close colleagues with Lupe Garcia, a principal at El Carmelo. At lunch, Lupe told her dad that El Carmelo’s secretary was retiring after 25 years. Jen’s dad told Jen. *The rest is history... ;)*

### Family

Jennifer and her family live in West Menlo Park. She is **next-door neighbors with her dad**. At an Easter brunch she was hosting, her dad saw the attractive house next door and decided he would sell his home in Palo Alto and retire there.

Julian is a tennis coach at La Entrada Middle School and a private tennis instructor.

Jen and Julian have **two daughters: Victoria**, a hard-working freshman at Cal, and **Rafi**, a 6th grader at La Entrada who plays soccer and tennis and rides horses.

The family also includes **two rescued dogs**: a 6 year-old Jack Russell terrier, **Fergie**, and a 9 year-old mix, **Raya**.

### Hobbies

Jennifer has **owned horses since high school**. She keeps her current horse, **Lady Jane**, at Portola Pastures. Her **love of horses** comes from her dad, who brought the family to Silver Springs every summer, where he earned extra income as a horse packer for backpacking trips, and her grandfather, a Head Master at a boarding school that owned many horses.

*Below: Daughter Rafi riding Lady Jane*



## Working at El Carmelo

### What I Like:

*I love my job!  
Ginny's an awesome co-worker.  
The kids are fabulous. I love the kids!  
El Carmelo has a great professional staff.*

### What I Dislike:

*getting here at 7:30 in the morning*

# People of El Carmelo

Meet Secretary Ginny Nagao

## GINNY NAGAO



### Childhood

Ginny Nagao grew up in New Jersey. Her dad encouraged his two daughters to focus on math and science. "He always told us we could be engineers," said Ginny.

### Education

Ginny, a **strong soccer player and swimmer** in high school, was confident she could handle the physical challenges at the **Naval Academy**.

Ginny was **one of 104 females in the freshman class of 1200 students; she was one of the 53 females who graduated**. She was a **Systems Engineering major**.



Ginny said, "I had to be pretty thick skinned." According to Jennifer Fernandez, this experience is why "nothing ever bothers Ginny."

### Career

After graduating, Ginny joined the **Civil Engineer Corps in the Navy**. Her focus was construction management for the Marines, so she was able to be stationed with her husband, a Marine.

When her husband went to Columbia Business School, Ginny transferred to a weapons station in New Jersey and worked as an Assistant Public Works Officer there.

By the time her husband earned his MBA, she had two young sons and decided she'd had enough

of 12-hour days. She left the Navy and became a stay-at-home mom.

### Finding El Carmelo

**Ginny has been at El Carmelo continuously since 1989**, when her oldest son started here as a Kinder. Her other two kids also went through El Carmelo. Ginny started working at El Carmelo as a Teacher's Aide for Mrs. Chandler in 1996. She later worked for Mrs. Chin and also helped out with reading and yard duty.

When Ginny found out that one of the El Carmelo secretaries was transferring to the PAUSD office, she decided to apply for the job. *The rest is history... ;)*

In 2006, Jennifer Fernandez and Ginny both started as new secretaries at El Carmelo at the same time. They had never met.

### Family

**Ginny and her family have lived on South Court (two blocks from El Carmelo) for the past 23 years.**

Ginny met her husband Dan during her freshman year at the Naval Academy. **They were married three days after her graduation**. Dan is a Human Resources consultant and owns his own business. Ginny does the company's bookkeeping.

She has **three kids: Kyle** (27), who works in Japan and is getting married this summer; **Ryan** (25), a PhD student in biomedical engineering at the University of Texas; and **Brenna** (22), a recent UC Davis grad who now lives in Washington, DC.

### Hobbies

Ginny enjoys **walking and biking**. She is an **avid reader**. She loves mysteries and is currently reading the Aurelio



Zen series by British crime writer Michael Dibdin.



## Working at El Carmelo

### What I Like:

working with Jen  
The staff are all very nice.  
The kids make us laugh almost every day.  
The commute is great. (2 blocks)

### What I Dislike:

There is too much to do in 5 hours!



**SCHOLASTIC BOOK FAIR • 11/7 - 11/10**

*To the book fair and beyond!*



El Carmelo's out-of-this world, alien-themed book fair runs next week, November 7-10th in the MP Room.

The Scholastic Book Fair provides affordable, popular titles for our children,

immersing them in reading and promoting a life-long love of books.

**Scholastic also provides many offerings for parents.** Come browse and treat yourself to a new novel or cookbook; see what your kids are into and get started on your holiday shopping!

**The Book Fair proceeds directly support El Carmelo's library and**

**wonderful librarian, Leslie Bell.**

Funds from the fair expand our collection of books and other library materials.

**Teachers also have the opportunity to create wish lists that your family can help fulfill for the classrooms;** gifts to the teachers from those wishlists expand the selection of books your kids use in school on a daily basis.

The book fair will be held in the MP room and will be open before school, during lunch and recess, and after school (Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 8am to 3:30pm; Wednesday: 8am to 2:30pm).

**Unable to stop in during the day? We are offering a cozy evening of stories, milk and cookies, and**



**Stories with Milk & Cookies**  
Tuesday, November 8, 6:30-8pm

**shopping on Tuesday, November 8th, from 6:30-8:00 pm.**

Many of you have already offered to help: look for emails to sign up for set-up and staffing the book fair. It is great fun assisting the kids as they choose books. Their excitement as they browse new titles is contagious!



Contact: Kate Karagueuzian Gibbons at [katekagg@gmail.com](mailto:katekagg@gmail.com)

**FAMILY GAME NIGHT • TUESDAY, 11/15, 6-8PM**



**When: Tuesday, 11/15, 6-8pm**

**Where: MP Room**

Come and join us in a fun-filled evening of playing Gamewright's fun and educational games, from best sellers such as *Scrambled States of America™ Game*, *Sleeping Queens*, *Slamwich*, and *Rat-a-Tat Cat*, to its newest titles, which include *Forbidden Island* and *The Baffler™*. There will be over 40 different titles in all.

**Gamewright prides itself on making games that foster laughter, learning, friendship and fun.** They have games for preschoolers to adults. Kids, parents, grandparents, and educators all agree that Gamewright makes some of the best games on the planet. For more information, please visit [www.gamewright.com](http://www.gamewright.com).

In addition, **El Carmelo will be selling Gamewright games during the event, and 50 percent of the profits will go back to support our school.** You may also drop off your order form in the office through November 19th.

Contact: Stephanie Youngquist at [yoyo2000@pacbell.net](mailto:yoyo2000@pacbell.net) or 327-4284

**FAMILY RESTAURANT NIGHT AT PIZZA MY HEART • TUESDAY, 12/6, 4-10PM**

FORGET ABOUT COOKING on Tuesday, December 6... and help El Carmelo. Dine in or take out. Invite your friends, neighbors, and Grandma! **No flyer necessary - just be sure to say you're supporting the El Carmelo PTA!!!** 30% of your purchase will be donated to the El Carmelo PTA.

Contact: Jeannette Cheng at [chencer@gmail.com](mailto:chencer@gmail.com) or Susy Kim at [susykim@gmail.com](mailto:susykim@gmail.com)



220 UNIVERSITY AVE., PALO ALTO



### PIE DONATIONS DAYS • 11/9 - 11/18

**DOUBLE YOUR DONATION** when you take advantage of the **PIE Challenge Grant between November 9 through 18!**

During that time, *every* dollar donated to PiE will be matched— up to a total of \$250,000 — thanks to this challenge made possible by generous parents like you. Please help us help our kids by donating today at [www.papie.org/donate](http://www.papie.org/donate) OR leave your donation in the PiE box in the school office. Contact: Alli Wong at [allison\\_wong17@yahoo.com](mailto:allison_wong17@yahoo.com); Faiza Zarroug at [fazarroug@gmail.com](mailto:fazarroug@gmail.com); Kaumudi Bhawe at [kaumudib@gmail.com](mailto:kaumudib@gmail.com); or Susy Kim at [susykim@gmail.com](mailto:susykim@gmail.com)



#### What PiE Funds at our school:

- \*Classroom Support  
Teachers' Aides, instructional assistants, reading/math specialists and staff who support and enrich all students' learning.
- \*Science Enrichment  
Programs and specialists who help science "come alive" for students through hands-on units.
- \*Art Instruction  
Trained staff who teach Spectra Art and comparable creative art instruction.

### AMAZON.COM SCHOOL REWARDS PROGRAM IS BACK!!!



Planning to buy something on Amazon? Maybe a book or DVD? How about a birthday gift or early holiday shopping? **Before you go to Amazon.com to make the purchase, STOP!** Your purchase can result in a donation to El Carmelo.

Amazon has recently reinstated the California Affiliates Program. This allows El Carmelo to once again offer

the Amazon School Rewards Program to our friends, family and community.

**The program is easy to use. If you are making an Amazon purchase, simply use the El Carmelo-Amazon link** (<http://www.amazon.com/?encoding=UTF8&tag=elcar-20>) instead of going directly to the Amazon site. *Your account settings will stay the same and the site will look the same. Since the link is difficult to remember, we suggest that you bookmark it or*

access it through the [El Carmelo school website](http://elcarmelo.pausd.org/wordpress/) (<http://elcarmelo.pausd.org/wordpress/>) or the [PTA website](http://elcarmelo.paloaltopta.org/) (<http://elcarmelo.paloaltopta.org/>)

Amazon will donate 4-15% of your purchase price to El Carmelo whenever you use this link. Last year, El Carmelo earned \$1,250 from this program. Please help us to once again make this program a success!

Contact: Jeannette Cheng at

### SEE'S CANDIES FUNDRAISER

- Do you normally stand in line at a See's store during the holidays to buy candy?
- Do you buy See's candy and ship it to relatives outside California?
- Do you purchase See's Candy for host or hostess gifts during the holidays?
- Do you purchase See's Candy for holiday gifts or stocking stuffers?



It's that time again! Time for the See's Candies Fundraiser! We are bringing the See's candy shopping service to YOU! Look for the flyers in your child's Friday Folder. **Orders and money are due on Friday, December 2.** Candy will be delivered the week after.



Contact: Tzielan Lee at [tzielan@hotmail.com](mailto:tzielan@hotmail.com)

### SHOP AT CHEEKY MONKEY TOYS... AND SUPPORT EL CARMELO!

**When:** November 25 to December 9

**How:** (1) **Shop in-store and mention the fundraiser for El Carmelo Elementary** OR (2) **Shop online, select "Fundraisers and Gift Cards" and add El Carmelo Elementary Fundraiser to your cart.**

**Why:** 10% of your net purchases go to support the El Carmelo PTA!

**Where:** Cheeky Monkey Toys

640 Santa Cruz Avenue, Downtown Menlo Park  
650.328.7975, [www.cheekymonkeytoys.com](http://www.cheekymonkeytoys.com)



*Complimentary gift wrap and assembly always available!*



## EL CARMELO ROCKS AS IT WALKS AND ROLLS



On a bright sunny Friday morning October 7, a torrent of children and parents filled the streets and sidewalks coming to El Carmelo. We were focusing on alternatives to single passenger cars. The event's date change that folks nimbly adjusted to did not deter nearly 250 students from participating. We were delighted to be joined by PAUSD School Board Member Barbara Mitchell.

The children were thrilled to receive a glow-in-the-dark wristband to affirm their good efforts. The 5th grade traffic and safety patrol kindly helped to distribute them.

One parent, who normally rides a bike with her daughter, remarked that it was almost a traffic jam of bicycles at one point on their ride.

**Congratulations and keep up the good work El Carmelo Dragons!**

Contact: Mary Lou Meeks (Traffic Safety Rep.) at [marylounet@netzero.net](mailto:marylounet@netzero.net)

## COOL ACTIONS BY EL CARMELO FAMILIES HELP COOL THE EARTH

**By Soowon Kim and Kristina Im (5th grade)**

For a few weeks at the beginning of the school year, Kindergarteners through 3rd graders at El Carmelo participated in the "Cool The Earth" program. The program encouraged each student/family to join in energy saving activities described in the Golden Coupon Book that was distributed after our Cool the Earth assembly.

The results? Fantastic! The enthusiastic El Carmelo families have far exceeded the goal of taking 1000 actions within 3 weeks (we actually had to conclude the program earlier than planned because we ran out of the trading cards that were given to students in exchange for the coupons they brought!).

**Collectively, we pledged 1678 actions, and those actions translated into an estimated annual saving of over a million pounds of CO2!**

Among the most frequently

pledged action items were:



using reusable water bottles



remembering to recycle



walking/biking/carpooling to school



practicing no waste lunches



turning water off while brushing teeth

taking shorter showers

running dishwashers fully loaded.

Some families also came up with their own action items such as turning off the lights when leaving the room, using reusable (cloth) napkins, using both sides of the paper, and giving toys away instead of throwing them away. Aren't these cool ideas that we could easily implement to "Cool The Earth"?

We thank each and every child who participated and his/her family for joining the program. It is great to know that we can make a difference as a community when we together take small steps in our everyday lives to save the earth. Let's also remember that every action counts. Adopting one earth-saving habit at a time is always a good place to start.

*Great work, everyone!*





# In Appreciation

*A Great Big THANK YOU to the El Carmelo Community*

**Sponsor-a-Book:** *Sripriya Kannan*, and *Kate Karagueuzian-Gibbons* for chairing the effort to increase our library collection by allowing families to donate books and for coordinating with *Librarian Leslie Bell* to arrange times when families could stop by the library to select a book (or more) to sponsor.

**Walk & Roll to School Day:** *Mary Lou Meeks* for coordinating our celebration of alternative transportation, *Ann Holum* for photography, *School Board Member Barb Mitchell* for visiting our school site and supporting our efforts by greeting walkers/rollers/carpoolers/bus riders and handing out prizes, and the *5th Grade Safety Patrol* for their help with keeping the larger-than-usual number of walkers and rollers safe and handing out prizes. Let's keep El Carmelo green by walking, rolling, carpooling, and riding the bus to school.

**Stanford Football Game Fundraiser:** *Kori Shaw* for coming up with a great idea for a fabulously fun family afternoon in the sun; supported by *Lucinda Brommersma*, *Susy Kim*, *Erika Krugler*, *Leslyn Leong*, *Tais Schmitt*, *Carola Vasquez*, *Alli Wong*, and *Karole Goldie* for their help with ticket sales and distribution.

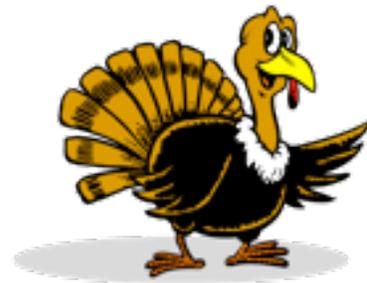
**3rd Grade Bike Safety Rodeo:** *Kyrie Robinson* for coordinating between the City of Palo Alto, 3rd grade teachers, and Principal to make a wonderful hands-on lesson about bicycle

safety happen for every third grader; supported by *Alli Wong*, *Andy Mutz*, *Blandine Chaperot-Merino*, *Cory Williamson*, *David Cohen*, *Evi Klein*, *Faiza Zarroug*, *Hagit Katzenelson*, *Jason Lewis*, *Jayne Pearce*, *Julia Jacobsen*, *Kyrie Robinson*, *Lance Berger*, *Liu Ding*, *Luis Michel*, *Maria Derrick*, *Shannon Silva*, *Sharon Tobias*, *Stephanie Youngquist*, *Susy Kim*, *Tais Schmitt*, *Vernon Bevans* (*Kori Shaw's dad!*), and *Zoë Mount*.

**Picture Make-up Day:** *Beata Madej* for making sure the morning ran smoothly and helping to ensure families got great pictures of their kids.

**School Play:** *Erina Dubois* for her Herculean leadership skills, organization, and sense of humor in chairing this valuable Palo Alto Children's Theater outreach program; supported by *Erin Duran*, *Kathleen Ford*, *Jennifer Fernandez*, *Ginny Nagao*, *Chuck Merritt*, and *Jerry Phok*. Also special thank you's to *Kathy Chin*, *Gaelyn Mason*, and *Nan Knoblauch* for their amazing trust and patience by giving students the dressing rooms and Green room.

**Pumpkin Project:** *Dee Rehbock* for hosting a fun opportunity for our children to display their finest jack-o-lantern artwork.



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

Send email or editable document to [carmeletter@paloaopta.org](mailto:carmeletter@paloaopta.org).

For more info, see the El Carmelo PTA website ([www.elcarmelo.paloaopta.org/carmeletter.html](http://www.elcarmelo.paloaopta.org/carmeletter.html)).

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Email Faiza Zarroug at [fazarroug@gmail.com](mailto:fazarroug@gmail.com).