



CARMELETTER

Principal's Letter

Dear El Carmelo parents,

You have heard a lot about Project Cornerstone and the 41 Developmental Assets this school year. Did you know that Student Service is one of the Development Assets that build social and emotional health in kids? Project Cornerstone has found that students' serving others in their school or community correlates positively with other positive qualities such as emotional well-being and academic success.

This is promising to be a special year for opportunities for student service at El Carmelo. **The Leadership Club** has been reconfigured to include three grade levels: 3rd, 4th and 5th. Interested students applied in October to join the Leadership Club and now have selected teams that they will work on to provide service to the school community. These teams are: the Recycling Team, the Multimedia Group, the Peaceful Playgrounds Team and the Traffic Safety Patrol.

The Recycling Team, working with Ms. McCoy, will be doing a variety of activities to help students at El Carmelo with the composting and recycling program at school. They will not only help others understand how to sort their own recycling but will also conduct Trash Audits, learning how to keep track of the whole school's progress.

The Multimedia Group has a variety of projects that they are working on. They are already writing articles for the school



website (look for these on the [Student Features link](#)), giving the student perspective on school activities. They will also be working with me on producing online assembly material, learning how to create videos.

The Peaceful Playgrounds Team is meeting in November to put together a Project Cornerstone idea called FunZone. This is a way for students to draw upon their own interests and talents to provide creative lunchtime activities for other students. Many have already begun providing playground support, such as helping other kids with equipment.

The Traffic Safety Patrol has been functioning since the start of school, and new students will be folded into their work through the Leadership Club.

All of these student service activities not only provide assistance to the school community but also build emotional and social help in the students themselves.

congratulations to all of the students that have volunteered to be leaders at El Carmelo!

Have a great November!

--Chuck Merritt
cmerritt@pausd.org



Calendar

- Monday, November 12**
No School (Veterans' Day)
- Wednesday, November 14**
Coffee with the Principal, 8:30am
- Thursday & Friday, November 15 & 16**
PIE Donation Days 
- Wednesday to Friday, November 21 to 23**
No School (Thanksgiving Break)
- Friday, November 30**
Vision Screening (K, 2, 5)
- Monday to Friday, December 3 to 7**
Inclusive Schools Week
- Tuesday, December 4** 
Restaurant Night at Chevy's
- Wednesday, December 5**
PTA Executive Board Meeting, 8:30am
- Friday, December 7**
See's Fundraiser Ends

Most current calendar at <http://www.elcarmelo.palocaltppta.org/carmeletter.html>



EVERYONE, save the date, get out of your comfort zone, and participate in the Auction, the PTA's biggest fundraiser!





PTA President's Letter

Dear El Carmelo parents and staff,

We are very excited to partner with Principal Merritt to bring a very rich Parent Ed program to El Carmelo this year.

We started with Sarah Newman, an El Carmelo Parent and a teacher in elementary school in the PAUSD, who came to the General PTA Meeting in October to talk about

Mindfulness. Sarah gave us an introduction on what Mindfulness is and how it can help us in our daily lives in dealing with stress, improving balance, and being more compassionate towards others and ourselves. After the talk, many of us asked Sarah if she would offer Mindfulness practice sessions at El Carmelo, and she has agreed. As a result, Sarah has started a six-week class on Monday mornings, in the El Carmelo Library, beginning on November 5. If you missed the first class, please contact Sarah at sarah@themindfulkids.com.

Next, El Carmelo is partnering with Fairmeadow to provide our parents with some of the great programs offered by **Project Cornerstone.** In September's Coffee with the Principal, Soma McCandless, from Project Cornerstone, presented the "Introduction to the Assets," a research-proven developmental assets model to help young people thrive. Soma will be presenting the same introduction at Fairmeadow on Thursday, November 8.

In January, Soma will return to El Carmelo, with co-sponsorship by Fairmeadow, to lead the "Take it Personally - Asset Champion Training" workshop from Project Cornerstone. In this six-session workshop, Soma will discuss all 41

Developmental Assets in detail and will offer an abundance of ideas, tools and strategies for us to increase and strengthen the developmental assets we provide to our kids. I attended this workshop in September/October at JLS and loved it! Our group bonded together, and we decided to keep meeting monthly to continue brainstorming, discussing, and supporting each other in our commitments. What a great opportunity to create a network of supporting friends, committed to helping each other in the enormous task of raising healthy, balanced, adjusted, well-rounded kids! **The "Take it Personally" six-week workshop will be held at El Carmelo on Monday mornings, at 8:40 a.m., on 1/14, 1/28, 2/4, 2/11, 2/25 and 3/4, at the El Carmelo Library. Mark your calendars!** You can find more information about Project Cornerstone at <http://www.projectcornerstone.org>.

In the spring, we are bringing to El Carmelo Janada Clark, a parent educator and parent coach, and an authorized trainer of the **Love & Logic curriculum.** Janada will come to the Coffee with the Principal in March to discuss the ideas in the book *Parenting with Love and Logic* by Foster Cline and Jim Fay. The Love and Logic approach advocates raising responsible children by allowing them to make choices and experience the natural consequences of the choices they make. The authors distinguish their approach from the "helicopter parenting" approach in which parents are constantly hovering over their



children and assisting them in every little difficulty, and also from the "sergeant parent," who constantly shouts orders to their children. You can find more about the Love and Logic approach at <http://www.loveandlogic.com>.

www.loveandlogic.com.

Finally, our Parent Ed team is looking into bringing to El Carmelo speakers to talk about **Cyber Safety.** Although our kids may not be old enough to have a Facebook account, soon enough they will be joining the virtual world and making their mark. It is never too early for us parents to start preparing ourselves for the challenge ahead. The virtual world is a much larger environment, with a huge audience, no privacy, and everything posted is permanent. It is very important to guide our kids on how to make a "good mark" in the stage they are about to enter and also how to be safe. We never experienced anything like this as we grew up, and it is up to us to set the models, the standards, and to figure out what works and what doesn't. It will be great to get a helping hand! Stay tuned for news about Cyber Safety later on in the school year.

What an array of resources! From calming ourselves, to building developmental assets and a network to support our kids, to getting advice on parenting, to getting new skills to navigate the new, virtual environment – it is great to be able to share the puzzle of raising our kids with friends and figure it out together!

Happy Thanksgiving!



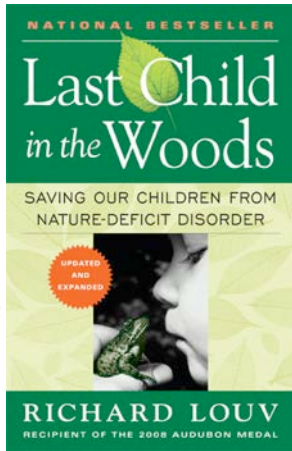
--Tais Schmitt
thschmitt@pacbell.net



WHY THE YOUNG (AND THE REST OF US) NEED NATURE

Written By Patricia Campbell, campbell.nororian@gmail.com (parent of an El Carmelo 3rd grader)

If you had a child in kindergarten at El Carmelo last year, you may have noticed a caterpillar in their classroom in the spring. I'm the parent who supplies each kindergarten teacher with an Anise Swallowtail egg that hatches into a caterpillar, grows more than 10 times its original length, forms a chrysalis, and emerges as a butterfly. The whole process takes about five weeks, and the children get to see complete metamorphosis from start to finish.



lost their connection to the natural world.

It wasn't that long ago that kids used to play outdoors, unsupervised, for hours at a time. Vacant lots, open fields, and other wild places provided fertile ground for children's imaginative play. But now, between homework, music lessons, soccer practice and other activities, we have gotten too busy to get out into nature, and the allure of the indoors, with its computers, TV and video games, always seems to win out.

There are costs associated with this shift. We (and our children) are so bombarded with information that we are missing out on the kind of experiential learning that nature can offer. The binary code of computing, with all its amazing potential, cannot compete with our multi-sensory experience of the natural world.

Last Child in the Woods argues that our children's health, and that of the planet, will depend on re-establishing these broken connections with nature. Finding the time and the opportunities are not always easy, but here are a few ways to get started:

Take the time to look around you. Small children are especially good at this, although it's often inconvenient for their grown-ups. Nature is everywhere and not just in a park. If you see a snail walking on the sidewalk after it rains, take a minute to watch it travel. Let a ladybug crawl on your hand. Admire spiders' webs.



Get to know the names of things: plants, trees, rocks, birds, constellations, insects, or anything else that interests you. Giving a name to something is a way of knowing it, and we don't value what we cannot name.



Above: leaf bug

Get to know your own backyard. Put out a hummingbird feeder. Try to identify the animal sounds you hear. Listen for crickets. Camp out overnight. A leaf bug landed on our screen door one night, and we brought it inside to look at for a few minutes. *Amazing.*

Plant something from seed. There's nothing like watching things sprout. It's a low-cost, low-skill, high-reward activity. You just need to remember to keep the dirt moist. Seeds are cheap, or see me if you want some for free.



Above: Anise Swallowtail butterfly

I do this because I like to share what I think of as everyday miracles: the amazing feats that nature performs around us all the time and that we usually overlook.

Another reason I do this is to combat "**Nature-Deficit Disorder**," a phrase coined by Richard Louv in his book *Last Child in the Woods*. This book explores the way young people, just in the last few decades, have

"The future will belong to the nature-smart - those individuals, families, businesses, and political leaders who develop a deeper understanding of the transformative power of the natural world and who balance the virtual with the real. The more high-tech we become, the more nature we need."

— Richard Louv in his most recent book, *The Nature Principle: Human Restoration and the End of Nature-Deficit Disorder*



PARTNERS IN EDUCATION (PIE) - AN EL CARMELO DONOR SPOTLIGHT



Above: Gurunathan family in Yosemite

Name: Melanie & Suresh Gurunathan

Children: Savith, 6 (1st grader); Sachin, 3

Where you are from?

Melanie grew up in Canada, and Suresh grew up in South India.

Your education philosophy?

Education was fundamental in both of our childhoods. Despite our parents not having college degrees, we both completed graduate degrees and hence emphasize the importance of education to our

own kids. We believe in enjoying and focusing on school while finding a balance with character building experiences such as sports, music and travel.

Why you donate to PiE? How has PiE touched your kid's life?

In today's fiscal crisis, as parents, we have to invest in what we think is important for our next generation. PiE allows us to invest directly in our neighborhood schools. El Carmelo has begun to foster our son's curiosity and love for school. The incredible teachers are empowered to grow our kids through **smaller student-teacher ratios** (provided by teacher's aides). They also have help from supplementary educational programs from great places such as the **Junior Museum** and specific resources such as **art and music**

professionals. These programs are no longer offered in many neighboring school districts.

questions about PiE? contact:

Faiza Zarroug, fazarroug@gmail.com,

Kanwal Raza, kanwalsraza@gmail.com,

or Medha Nanal, medha_00@yahoo.com

(PiE co-chairs)



Don't miss out!
DOUBLE YOUR DONATION!
November 9-16

Your PiE donation can be matched - dollar for dollar - up to \$225,000 total, thanks to the **Donation Days Challenge** offered by generous PiE supporters.

http://www.papie.org/03_Donate/HowToGive.html

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



Young person feels comfortable with and proud of her/his identity, including but not limited to disabilities, ethnicity, faith/religion, family status, gender, language, and sexual orientation.

It is important for youth to feel that they belong. Positive identity brings self-assurance, a sense of belonging, a positive view of personal future, and better success in school. Developing a positive cultural identity—a critical element of personal identity—can be difficult for young people, especially when they may be bridging more than one culture.

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

Sharing and celebrating different cultural identities increases self-esteem and promotes

cultural competence among all young people. The diversity of Palo Alto is a benefit to our youth as they are exposed to many different cultures.

The following discussion topics* can help families talk about their cultural identity:

- What is our cultural background?
- What are some things that you value about 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?

*Adapted from the Canadian Child Care Federation's "Supporting our children's Social Well-Being...It's a Team Effort!" workshop

This content is based on Project Cornerstone's Asset-a-Month program resource kit. For more information, visit www.projectcornerstone.org.

SEE'S CANDIES FUNDRAISER

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



It's that time again... time for the See's Candies fundraiser. We are bringing the See's Candies shopping service to YOU! Look for flyers in your child's Friday Folder. Orders and money are due on Friday, 12/7. Candy will be delivered the week after.

--Questions? Tzielan Lee, tzielan@hotmail.com

MAKE MONEY FOR EL CARMELO... AT NO COST TO YOU!!!



With the Holidays coming up, many of us will SHOP ONLINE for gifts.

Make it count!

The Amazon School Rewards Program donates between 2 and 15% of your purchase price to the El Carmelo PTA.

Do you shop online?

Then, you can raise money for El Carmelo at the same time. And it won't cost you a cent!

Here are 2 ways to donate to El Carmelo at no cost to you:

1. Before you shop at Amazon, simply use the link <http://www.tinyurl.com/ElCarmeloAmazon>. You can shop as usual after using this initial link. All your account settings will stay the same, and the site will look the same.



Bookmark this link now!

2. Sign up once for eScrip at <http://www.tinyurl.com/ElCarmeloeScrip> and enter "El Carmelo PTA" as the group name, click search, and click on the found El Carmelo PTA group. Then follow the steps to sign up. Once signed up, every time you shop at a store that you registered (e.g., your Safeway club card or such), the store will donate a percentage of your purchase price to the El Carmelo PTA. Also, visit the [eScrip Online Mall](#) and shop with over 700 merchant partners.



If you have any questions, contact Grit Denker at grit.denker@sri.com or (650) 269-1034.

RESTAURANT NIGHT AT CHEVY'S

Show how much you care... eat a fajita!

What: Family Restaurant Night at Chevy's

When: Tuesday, December 4, 2012, 11am to 10pm

Where: Chevy's

2116 W El Camino Real
Mountain View
650-691-9955, www.chevys.com



Aren't you glad you don't have to be a Field Trip driver this year?

It's because the PTA can help pay for school buses this year... thanks to YOUR participation in fundraisers like Restaurant Night.



Bring the fundraising flyer (in your Friday folder), and 15% of your purchase will be donated to the El Carmelo PTA.

Questions? Lucinda Brommersma (lucinda@lucindabrommersma.com) or Krissy Green (kriselin7@gmail.com)



The Pizza My Heart event last month made \$401. Wow!



In Appreciation

A sincere thanks to the El Carmelo community...

Family Night with Mariachi

Trio: *Maritza Ortiz, Amy Love, Svetlana Gamolya, and Sonja Froeblich*, for organizing a delightful and festive evening of music, food, and good company! They enthusiastically hosted about 200 people! Thank you to all other parents who brought food and helped to clean up.

Walk & Roll to School:

Teachers *Diane McCoy* and *Annette Isaacson* for leading the celebration of alternative transportation to school.

Bike Safety Rodeo:

Impeccably organized by *Shannon Silva* and *Sharon Tobias*, with the help of parents *Hanh Nguyen, Sripriya Kannan, Amie Neff, Lucinda Brommersma, Lisa Loewy, Patricia Campbell, Matt Podoll, Krissy Green, Gwen Fischer, Jayne Pearce, Ksbama Jirage, Kate Gibbons, Dana Roman, Qian Anson, Rurong Xie, David Lehavi, Hinako Fujita, Kanako Murakami, Jessie Chen, Rekha Goel, Samantha Lemonnier, Lucy Tompkin*, our Principal *Chuck Merritt*, our Third Grade Teachers *Mr. Walton, Mr. Jantzy* and *Ms. Haughney*, our Third Grade Aides *Karan Barich, Jennifer Chu*, and *Nancy Starr*, Cycling Club Volunteers, Palo Alto Fire Department, Palo Alto Police Department, and *Kathy Durham*, from Palo Alto Medical Foundation. Third Grade students were very engaged and enjoyed the opportunity to learn and practice new bicycling skills.

Mindfulness: *Sarah Newman*, for a calming, informative and inspiring evening in which she

told us about Mindfulness and its benefits in our daily lives.

Hearing Screening: *Julia Jacobsen, Maria Carranza, Jeanette Cheng, Sarah Newman, Julia Jacobsen, Maria Derrick, Erika Krugler, and Erich Heilman*, for ensuring an orderly hearing test.

Ice Skating Party: Chaired by *Doreen Rebbock, Paulette Kamenecka* and *Arunashree Bhamidipati*, at the Winter Lodge, assisted by *Susy Kim, Grit Denker, Yanping Ni, Anne Chen, Hagit Katzenelson, Andrea Kiya, Devony Taylor, Joy Zhang, and Vivian Tsoi*, featuring delicious desserts generously provided by *Vivian Tsoi, Devony Taylor, Doreen Rebbock, Arunashree Bhamidipati, and Paulette Kamenecka*. We had 243 skaters, plus parents and siblings non-skaters!

Lice Control: *Andrea Jelks* for training our classroom lice checkers and to ALL of the parents who periodically check our kids' hair for those pesky bugs.

Sponsor-a-Book: *Kate Karagueuzian-Gibbons* and *Sripriya Kannan* for chairing the book donation program and *Ms. Leslie Bell* for organizing the books donated by parents to our school library and setting a time when families could choose the books they wanted to donate to the library. Thank you to all families that have donated books to the library though the Sponsor-a-Book program!

Restaurant Night: *Lucinda Brommersma* and *Krissy Green*, for organizing our first Family

Restaurant Night at Pizza My Heart. Everyone who went had a great time, and it was a very successful fundraising event! Look for more Family Restaurant Nights in the coming months.

Pumpkin Project: *Theresa McCann-Packer* and *Doreen Rebbock* for organizing the festive, creative, and fun Pumpkin Carving & Decoration Project.



Submissions for next Carmeletter due Thursday, 12/6/12

Email editable document to carmeletter@paloaltopta.org.

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

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

If not, you're missing out!



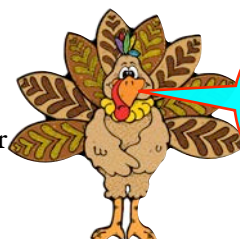
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Save money & paper!

Read the Carmeletter online only.



To stop receiving paper Carmeletter's, email Faiza Zarroug at fazarroug@gmail.com.



Seriously... save the date: Saturday, March 9, 2013. Our 36th Annual Auction!!! Gobble, gobble...