



CARMELETTER

Principal's Letter

November 7, 2014

Dear parents and students of El Carmelo,



These last couple of months have seen important service opportunities at El Carmelo that involve students, parents and teachers. On September 28, our Site Council co-sponsored with the **Emergency Preparedness** project of Palo Alto, a fair to inform the entire community of how to prepare your home for an

emergency. Thanks to Cynthia Tham for organizing this day. Next, the school hosted **Bike Palo Alto** on October 5, another city-wide event to promote safe bicycling.

Our service learning emphasis in the school continued with the launch of four service clubs. You've seen the **Traffic Safety Team** out in their vests since the start of school, watching drop-off and greeting families. The **Expect Respect Team** now has a variety of "sponge" activities at recess that they sponsor to help all students have something to do. These activities include the Chess table, the Crafts table, a Dance group, a Newspaper group and a Scavenger hunt. The **Green Team** has launched their service to the school by helping other students recycle and learn ways to protect the environment. Thank you Mrs. McCoy and Mrs. Isaacson for leading the student Green Team. The **Multimedia team** has been learning movie making and are already supporting the other teams with video projects. Many thanks to Mr. Young for training the Multimedia Team.

Along with our service learning focus this year, we continue to emphasize Empathy as a key social/emotional skill at El Carmelo. Many thanks to Christine Hodson and the ABC Reader volunteers for their work in supporting this effort by providing the Project Cornerstone curriculum to all of our classrooms.

We were joined by the rest of the Palo Alto Unified school community in celebrating Unity Day again.

CALENDAR

November

5 Wed: PTA Executive Board Meeting, 8:30 am
10 Mon: El Carmelo Site Council Meeting
11 Tue: No School, Veterans Day
12 Wed: Coffee with Principal 8:25 am
14 Fri: See's Candies fundraiser begins
20 Thur - 21 Fri: PiE Donation Days
26 Wed - 28 Fri: No School, Thanksgiving



December

1 Mon - 5 Fri: Inclusive Schools Week
2 Tue: PiE Phone-a-thon
3 Wed: PTA Executive Board Meeting 8:30 am
5 Fri: See's Candies fundraiser ends
8 Mon: El Carmelo Site Council Meeting
10 Wed: Staff Holiday Luncheon
15 Mon: PiE campaign ends
17 Wed: Coffee with Principal 8:25 am
19 Fri: Minimum Day
22 Mon - 31 Wed: No School, Winter Break

Find the 2014-2015 El Carmelo School Events & PTA Calendar here: elcarmelo.pausd.org. Find the district Calendar on this page: <http://events.pausd.org/>

The PAUSD celebration of **Unity Day** was on **October 23** and was part of National Bullying Prevention Month. The theme of the day was "**The end of bullying begins with me.**" Students were encouraged to think of ways to encourage civility and inclusion.

Just this last week the PTA voted to fund some exciting **Strategic Initiatives** as part of the plan to provide our students, teachers and parents with tools to learn. Many thanks to you all for the following:

- Kids' Community Library in the Reading Garden
- Parenting Resources for parent check-out in the Library
- Additional instructional garden space by the Library
- Additional Chromebooks for Writers' Workshop

On behalf of the staff of El Carmelo, I'd like to extend my heartfelt and humble thanks for the generous support of the programs of the school by our wonderful community!

Sincerely,
--Chuck Merritt
cmerritt@pausd.org



PTA President's Letter



Dear El Carmelo Parents and Staff,

I can't believe another wonderful Halloween costume parade has come and gone! We are well into our school year, and I hope your children are having a great time while learning all sorts of new things. We thank all of you who have signed up to volunteer and have returned the

One Check Form to the office. If you haven't already, please consider becoming a member of the PTA and supporting our school and children in this important way. The One Check Forms provide about 30% of our PTA's budget each year. Forms can be found at our website and can still be turned into the office.

<http://elcarmelowp.paloaltopta.org>

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you of why it is important to support and join our PTA. We do so many wonderful things for the school that enrich the experience for our children and support our teachers and staff in their mission. Check out all the great stuff that is happening due to the PTA this year:

Did you know the PTA...?

- Provides \$300 in discretionary funds to each teacher for them to use towards supplies for their room.
- Funds all the class field trips and buses.
- Provides parent education events as well as many enrichment activities for kids (assemblies, school play, noon art, reading garden, Stories under the Stars, noon sports...).
- Provides your child's school supplies and PE/recess equipment.
- Provides about \$7,000 a year to the library with funding from Sponsor-a-Book and the book fairs.
- Advocates for your children at the local and national levels. For example, the PTA was instrumental in pushing for and implementing the new healthier school lunch choices that rolled out two years ago.

New this year:

- We combined all the grade level picnics into one night complete with a food truck present. We held it the same night as the Scholastic Book Fair's Stories, Milk, & Cookies night. The evening was a lot of fun and raised more money than previous years at the book fair. We plan to continue this new tradition next year.
- **Fitness Fridays** from 8:00am-8:20am on the blacktop. We are exercising as a fun start to the day. It is open to the whole family, so come join us and check it out! Watch the whiteboards for the schedule as it gets colder.
- We are eliminating the monthly grade level teacher treats and replacing it with a Holiday Luncheon for the teachers. Look for info on how to contribute later this month.

Did you know our Strategic Initiative Fund...?:

- Purchased all the new "redwood" picnic tables that have replaced the metal tables around campus.
- Purchased a classroom set of Chromebooks for the upper grades and an iPad multimedia stations for each classroom in Kinder, 1st and 2nd grades.
- Sent two teachers over the summer to the Columbia Teachers College Writing Institute.
- The General Membership just approved purchase of the following for this year:
 - ◇ 3 more classroom set of Chromebooks for 3rd-5th grades.
 - ◇ A "free little library" for the Reading Garden for after-hours use by the public.
 - ◇ Improvements to the rock garden by the library for the upper grades. This will support the Service Learning Initiative being implemented schoolwide this year.
 - ◇ Funds for the Parent Resource Library in our school library.

Thanks for all you do to support our school and PTA!

Sincerely,
Kathryn Lamis
El Carmelo PTA President





Palo Alto Partners in Education (PiE)

You are going to hear a lot from PiE this month. That's because PiE is crucial. At El Carmelo, PiE makes possible the following:

- Classroom aides in **EVERY** class
- **Spectra Art** teachers Janet Mooma and Lisa Fremont
- The popular hands-on **science program given by the Palo Alto Junior Museum and Zoo**
- **Counseling** support available for all students
- **Math specialist** Kathy Nguyen



Here is a frequently asked question from parents who are not yet familiar with PiE.

Why do I need to give at all? Aren't public schools supposed to be free?

Public financing alone can no longer provide the high quality education we expect in this community. In order to maintain and build upon the academic excellence of PAUSD schools, which draws families to Palo Alto schools neighborhoods and keeps property values high, the community must seek additional funding.

California's ranking on per-student spending on education has steadily decreased since the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, a consequence of the state's tax-reform efforts. Two types of school classifications resulted from this funding reduction: Basic Aid and Revenue Limited. Revenue Limited districts do not raise enough taxes locally to meet the state minimums and therefore receive funding from the state based on the number of students enrolled. Basic Aid districts (such as Palo Alto) are perceived to have enough local tax revenue to meet minimum school funding and, thus, receive relatively little state funding.

As a Basic Aid district, we rely on the generosity of local donors and ballot measures, in addition to federal and state funding, to augment property taxes and support the school district's high standards of excellence.

Community-funded education is now the "norm" in top public school districts in California. PiE suggests \$800 per family. This is just a suggestion. **AMY AMOUNT** will be greatly appreciated and well spent; **your participation matters**. *Palo Alto is not alone in asking the community for help with its public schools; compare below.*

Examples of "Asks" at Neighboring School Districts:

San Carlos: \$1,000 per child

Los Altos: \$1,200 per child

Menlo Park: \$1,500 per child

Las Lomas: \$2,000 per child

More PiE FAQs available at papie.org.

We welcome all questions and comments... *and volunteers!* :)

—El Carmelo PiE Team: Yan Sun, Sarah Cornwell, Mizuho Goto, Medha Nanal, and Susy Kim

PiE Donations Days are coming November 20 and 21. If you donate or pledge by November 21, **your gift will be DOUBLED** - thanks to a Donation Days match by generous donors in the community up to \$225,000.

This is your last chance to DOUBLE YOUR GIFT this year!!

We welcome your donation or pledge in ANY AMOUNT that is comfortable for your family.

Donations are 100% tax deductible. Donate or pledge now at papie.org OR email elcarmelo@papie.org



Volunteers

With our sincere thanks....

Thanks to all of the parents who have volunteered to help with various PTA activities during the course of the year, as well as to all of the parents who support our teachers and children by working in classrooms.

Thanks to the parents who have already turned in the One Check Form. *Your generous donations allow the PTA to support our teachers and provide family-friendly activities for our children, as well as basic school supplies and field trips that are appreciated by each and every El Carmelo student.* If you haven't turned in your one-check form yet, there's still time. Need a new form? You can download one from the PTA website:

<http://www.elcarmelo.paloaltopta.org/forms.html>

Teacher Welcome Lunch: Thanks to Theresa McCann for organizing the *Welcome Back to School* luncheon on September 10th for our hardworking teachers and staff. Everyone raved about the Taco Cart, provided by Sergio Canteco. Our thanks as well to parent volunteers who supported that event, Robyn Reiss, Cynthia Tham, Tara MacCannell, Alison Chao, Kate Healy, Chantal Lacau, Abby Domine, Kate Karagueuzian-Gibbons, Jen Wiener, Isabel Santoro, Cecily McReynolds, Carolina Dias, Rachel Cooley, and Hong Ye.

Stanford Football Game fundraiser: Thanks to Kori Shaw, for organizing tickets and tailgating for this fun family event, to Susy Kim who helped make the signs and flyers, and to the awesome Stanford Football team for donating a portion of the tickets to our El Carmelo fundraiser. *Fear the Tree! Go Cardinal!*

Scholastic Book Fair: Thanks to our indefatigable co-chairs of this great fall event that fosters a love of reading and raises funds for our library: Kate Karagueuzian-Gibbons and Maria Derrick (see related Carmeletter article for details of this week-long event!)

3rd Grade Bike Safety Rodeo: Our hats off to Dave Sheaffer and Shannon Silva for organizing this impressive event along with members of the Police Department, the Palo Alto Medical Foundation, and the city's bike safety coordinators to teach our third graders about safety on their bicycles.

Thanks to all of our parent volunteers: Lorna Thornton, Jim Leontis, Sara Cornwall, Trevor Cornwall, Suresh Gurunathan, Tim Chao, Chantal Khuat Duy, Susy Kim, Blandine Merino, Bruce Woodley, Paul McBurney, Rachel Cooley, Liz Heilman-Espinoza, Julia Jacobsen, Victoriya Rfanova, Kate Healy, Abby Domine, Sara Kaye, Aurora Morales, Cecily McReynolds, Chris Flynn, Barbara Hirsch, Maria Derrick. *Plus, thanks for help from our staff:* Chuck Merritt, Kyle Jantzi, Michelle Haughney, and Eileen Laughlin.

Tacolicious Monday Fundraisers in October: A delicious thanks to Liz Heilman-Espinoza for organizing Taco Mondays in October. Yum!

Hearing and Vision Screening: Parents – did you know that your child is screened regularly for potential hearing and vision problems through work supported by PAUSD and El Carmelo parent volunteers? Our thanks to PAUSD for supporting these important and periodic screenings, and to parents who helped on those days: Julia Jacobsen, Victoriya Rfanova, Kate Karagueuzian-Gibbons, Robyn Reiss, Junko Brierly-Green, and Ann Holum. A very special thanks to Ginny Nagao and Jennifer Fernandez for organizing our efforts!

Walk-and-Roll-to-School: Thanks to Green Team leader Alison Chao for organizing El Carmelo's efforts to reduce our carbon footprint! Thanks to all of our volunteers that day who greeted our walkers and rollers with wristbands and water bottles: Maria Derrick, Wendy Ju, Jamie Liang, Taryn Irulegui, Annette Isaacson, and Diane McCoy. Thanks go to Chuck Merritt as well for bringing in the help of El Carmelo's team of students in our leadership club.

Ice-Skating Party/Fundraiser: Thanks to Barbara Hirsch, Annie Chen, and Peggy Hu for organizing the biggest skating party ever at Winter Lodge! There was pizza and skating for the whole family! What could be a better way to spend a Friday evening? Our thanks as well to the parents who volunteered to help with this event: Melanie Gurunathan, Hong Shen, Jen Shen, Kaumudi Bhawe, James Eron, Signe Forsdahl, and Lillandt Durosinmi Petra.





Volunteers

With our sincere thanks.... [CONTINUED]

Pumpkin Display Project: Thanks to Lorna Thornton and Lynn Fisher for organizing parents to collect, display, and supervise lunchtime viewing of over 70 pumpkins that were showcased on October 30th. Each year brings new and crazy decorating ideas. Each and every student who participated got a prize. Thanks to Lana Solovieva, Yan Tang, Delney Bystrom, Janet Owen, and Rosanna Jackson who helped with this effort.

Ongoing thanks for our Green Team: Our Green Team is amazing! Thanks to Alison Chao who organizes our Green Team, as well as to Diane McCoy and Annete Isaacson who are the staff advisors for the Green Team student body activities, along with Minjo Kim who supports these efforts. Once a week during lunch, students on the Green Team helps to assist and monitor the younger grade students (K-2) with correctly sorting their trash into the correct bins (recyclable, compost, trash). Starting next month on Nov. 19, the Green Team will be sponsoring **Waste Free Wednesdays** once a month.

On Waste Free Wednesdays, the teachers and children will be encouraged to bring waste free lunches in which every item is either consumed, or can be put into the compost or recycling bin. The Green Team students also help to make posters as needed for Green Team events. Any students in 3rd-5th grade can join. If you or your child is interested in being part of this team, contact Alison Chao, antchao@gmail.com.



Ongoing thanks for Coffee with the Principal: Thanks to Chris Flynn for organizing, advertising, and hosting this monthly event where we meet with Mr. Merritt and other guests to talk about what is happening at El Carmelo.

Our thanks as well to Stephanie Verbeek and Rashmi Hunt for supporting these events. The Coffees are off to a great start! This year, the first coffee was about Social and Emotional Learning in the new curriculum.

The second coffee featured our new Superintendent, Max McGee. For our third Coffee, Chuck opened the discussion by offering to explore El Carmelo's "Writers' Workshop", or to field parents' questions. Parents chose to ask Chuck questions, so the topics began with a discussion of lunch recess activities and challenges, and continued with Chuck's perspective on how our new superintendent might bring his own particular expertise to bear on PAUSD's goals and plans.

If you have questions for our principal that you think other parents might like to hear as well, please join us at the next *Coffee with the Principal!*

Would you like to volunteer for a school-wide event or ongoing activity? There are *many* opportunities you could consider that are listed on our website. Look us up at <http://www.elcarmelo.paloaltopta.org>.

Under the *volunteer* tab, select *El Carmelo PTA Volunteer Form 2014-2015*. After you browse through the possibilities on the form, you can send an email to me, Ann Holum, El Carmelo's VP of volunteer activities; holum@sbcglobal.net; or, you could call Ann to talk about your ideas (650 283 2336).





Library News

Welcome back to the El Carmelo School Library!

Thank you for shopping at last month's Scholastic Book Fair, which supports our Library at El Carmelo. It was wonderful to see so many kids thrilled with the fair and excited about picking out new books. We recommended many quality books at class visits and were delighted to see students eager to read them. More families than ever before attended Tuesday evening's Milk, Cookies, and Story Time event.

For the first time, the PTA paired the evening hours of the book fair with the Fall Class Picnics, much to our families' enjoyment. Kids were treated to stories in the library read by El Carmelo alum, Maggie Schmit, beloved teacher Nan Knoblauch, now retired, and current teachers Katie Rutledge and Heather Stone. We could not have succeeded in our efforts to raise money for the library and to put new books in our students' hands without the support, advice, time, muscle, and enthusiasm of many, many volunteers.

Thank you to Junko Brierley

-Green, Alison Chao,
Carolina Dias, Julia

Jacobsen, Sripriya Kannan,
Minjo Kim, Susy Kim,

Kanako Murakami, Robyn Reiss, Victoriya Rufanova,
Tais Schmitt, Berit Schulz, Lana Solovieva, Sharon

Tobias, Jen Wiener, and Hong Ye.

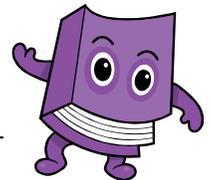


We owe a special thank you to Nan Knoblauch, Katie Rutledge, Heather Stone, and Maggie Schmit (and Elisa, too) for reading at our evening event.

As always, thanks are due to Leslie Bell, Chuck Merritt, Jennifer Fernandez, Ginny Nagao, Rickey Moore, and Jerry Phok for cheerful support before, during, and after the fair.

Sponsor-a-Book

The library at El Carmelo is a critical resource and a haven for our children, enriching and enlivening their experience at school and building their love of reading and their body of knowledge. Sponsor-a-Book is your chance to donate books to the library while also honoring those who are special to your children—family members, teachers, or friends—with a personalized message.



How do you sponsor a book?

You may have already donated \$15 for each book sponsored on the PTA's One-Check form. If you missed our first session in October to select books for sponsorship, mark your calendar for December 10th: the library will be open after school from 1:30-2:30 pm for you and your child to come "adopt" a book. Haven't sponsored a book yet, but would like to? No problem: come to the library on Wednesday, December 10th, bringing your checkbook with you. Donations are entirely tax-deductible, and all funds go to the purchase and maintenance of the library's books.

Can your child choose the book?

Your child can choose to sponsor a book from a number of books selected by our librarian, Leslie Bell, or he or she may pick a favorite title from the shelves of the library, as long as the book chosen has not previously been sponsored. An inscription will be placed in the book on a bookplate, and your child will feel proud to know that your family has supported our library, leaving a lasting legacy for the El Carmelo community.

Thanks to all who have already donated: your generosity enriches our children's experience.

Questions? Please contact Kate Karagueuzian Gibbons at katekgg@gmail.com, or Sripriya Kannan at sripriya_kannan@yahoo.com



Waste Free Wednesdays

Waste Free Wednesdays begin November 19

The Green Team is sponsoring **Waste Free Wednesdays** once a month starting on **Wednesday, November 19**.

What is a waste free lunch??? A waste free lunch is a lunch in which every item is either consumed completely or can be put into the compost or recycling bin. On Waste Free Wednesdays, the teachers and children are going to try **not** to have to throw any items into the garbage can. (That means no Capri Suns, Gogurts, chip bags, or boxed drinks.) Encourage your kids to bring their food and drinks in reusable containers. Here's a great time to use the Walk 'N Roll water bottles!



Why are we having Waste Free Lunches? The district is trying to save money on trash collection. They'd rather use the money for classroom expenses. The less trash we create, the cheaper the trash collection cost will be. Creating less trash is also good for the environment. We want to help our Mother Earth.

Thanks for your part in helping to keep the Earth green!

Project Cornerstone

Have you heard your child talking about being an upstander or filling someone's bucket? If so, they are using terms they have learned through our ABC Reader and Project Cornerstone program at El Carmelo. This is the third year at El Carmelo that parent readers have gone into each classroom once a month to talk about how we can have a positive climate at our school. After the reading in class, a letter is sent home with each student to continue this dialogue with their families.



Project Cornerstone is working to build a community of adults who support children and teenagers so they can thrive. The books chosen teach principles centered around the 41 developmental assets that have been shown to indicate children's ability to thrive and be resilient. As the parent readers come in month after month, each child in our school have more caring adults who they can look to for support and encouragement. The children are learning about ways to become upstanders and prevent bullying. They are also learning about ways to have more peaceful conflict resolutions, build friendships, take care of themselves emotionally and physically, and identify their feelings whether positive or negative.

We have a dedicated group of parents at El Carmelo who do age appropriate activities in conjunction with the books each month to teach about how to be a good friend or embrace our talents or stop bullying behaviors. In kindergarten our ABC readers are Paulette Kamenecka, Hannah Lee, Miranda Wann, and Devony Taylor. The first grade readers are Ann Holum and Christine Hodson. For the second grade kids, the readers are Kaumudi Bhawe, Rosanna Jackson, and Lynn Fisher. The third grader readers are Julia Jacobsen, Medha Nanal, and Alison Chao. For the fourth grade kids, our readers are Dave Sheaffer, Abby Domine, and Tanya Dodge. The fifth grade readers are Maria Derrick and Jayne Pearce. Christine Hodson and Katie Cicero lead this group of parents, and teachers and our principal also highlight the principles taught in the books throughout each month.

So far this year, we have been reading books about friendship and how to develop our talents and believe that we have personal power. Ask your kids about whether giraffes can dance and how all different types of people can be friends!

Click on the link below for pictures of the books we are reading:

<http://www.projectcornerstone.org/cms-assets/documents/177431-31545.displayboardchampionyeartoolkit.pdf>

Julia Jacobsen



Upcoming Events and Helpful Resources

Live Auction -SAVE THE DATE!!

March 21, at The University Club

The Theme is Lights, Camera, Auction! (think red carpet glamour, dress as your favorite movie star, get together with friends and come as the cast of your favorite movie)



New Websites and Facebook Page

El Carmelo is improving and increasing its online presence. Here are a few new updates:

New El Carmelo Website:
<http://elcarmelo.pausd.org/>

New El Carmelo PTA Website:
<http://elcarmelo.paloaltopta.org/>

Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/ElCarmeloPTA>

Please LIKE our page on Facebook -- you'll keep up to date on the latest PTA activities and events.

Community Links

The Palo Alto Council of PTAs invites you to visit the info pages on the PTA Council website to find information on community sports, parent education and community service opportunities:

Community Sports:
<http://info.paloaltopta.org/sports/>

Parent Education:
<http://info.paloaltopta.org/parents/>

Community Service:
<http://info.paloaltopta.org/service/>

Have an item to submit to the El Carmelo eNews?

Send an email to elcarmeloPTA_eneeds@paloaltopta.org

